

2013 Golden Jubilee edition

BIHAR YOGA®

Gheranda Samhita

Commentary on the Yoga Teachings
of Maharshi Gheranda

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



Yoga Publications Trust, Munger, Bihar, India

Gheranda Samhita



1963–2013
GOLDEN JUBILEE

WORLD YOGA CONVENTION 2013
GANGA DARSHAN, MUNGER, BIHAR, INDIA
23rd–27th October 2013

Gheranda Samhita

Commentary on the Yoga Teachings
of Sage Gheranda

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

*Discourses given during the Sannyasa Training Course
held at Ganga Darshan, Munger, 1992*



Yoga Publications Trust, Munger, Bihar, India

© Bihar School of Yoga 2012

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, transmitted or stored in a retrieval system, in any form or by any means, without permission in writing from Yoga Publications Trust.

The terms Satyananda Yoga® and Bihar Yoga® are registered trademarks owned by International Yoga Fellowship Movement (IYFM). The use of the same in this book is with permission and should not in any way be taken as affecting the validity of the marks.

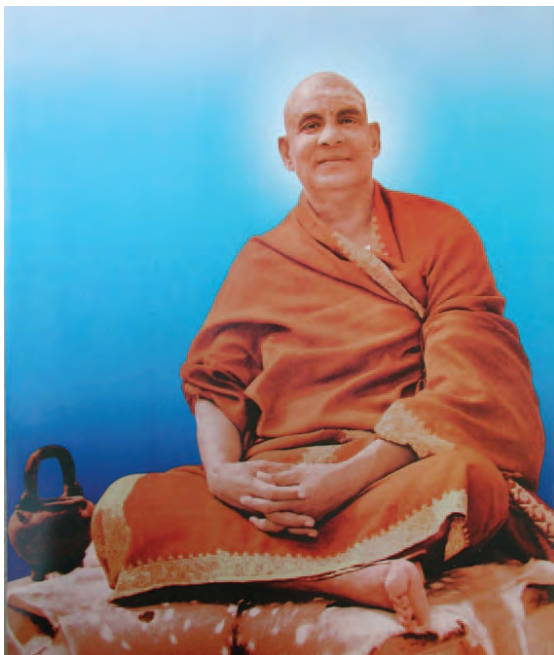
Published by Yoga Publications Trust
First published 2012

ISBN: 978-93-81620-19-9

Publisher and distributor: Yoga Publications Trust, Ganga Darshan,
Munger, Bihar, India.

Website: www.biharyoga.net
www.rikhiapeeth.net

Printed at Thomson Press (India) Limited, New Delhi, 110001



Dedication

*In humility we offer this dedication to
Swami Sivananda Saraswati, who initiated
Swami Satyananda Saraswati into the secrets of yoga.*

Contents

Introduction	1
Chapter One: Prologue & Shatkarma	
Prologue	9
Introduction to Shatkarma	34
Dhauti	41
Basti	107
Neti	118
Lauliki (Nauli)	129
Trataka	140
Kapalbhati (Bhalbhati)	150
Chapter Two: Asana	
Introduction to Asana	165
The Asana	168
Chapter Three: Mudra and Bandha	
Introduction to Mudra and Bandha	259
Bandha: Four Locks	264
Pancha Dharana	285
Mudra	307
Chapter Four: Pratyahara	
Pratyahara	371

Chapter Five: Pranayama	
Pranayama	383
Chapter Six: Dhyana	
Dhyana	455
Chapter Seven: Samadhi	
Samadhi: Highest State of Consciousness	485
Appendices	
A: Psychic Physiology of Yoga	517
B: Sanskrit Text	530
C: Translation	559
Glossary	591
Index of Practices	610
General Index	615

Introduction

Gheranda Samhita is a text on practical yoga by Sage Gheranda. In this work he describes Lord Vishnu: *Jale Vishnu thale Vishnu*, which means Vishnu is in water and Vishnu is on land (6:18). In one or two places Lord Narayana is also described, implying that the sage adopted Vaishnava philosophy in his life as well as being an accomplished hatha yogi. His form of yoga brings out knowledge by beginning with the body and progressing all the way to the essence of the soul. An outline of practices is given within this framework.

From the oldest surviving copies of *Gheranda Samhita*, it can be inferred that as a literary work it began in the seventeenth century. Of fourteen available manuscripts found in northern and eastern India and used for critical editions of *Gheranda Samhita*, the earliest copy dates back to 1802. As an oral tradition, passed from guru to disciple, these secret teachings would probably have survived for at least several centuries before being written down. No one knows where or when Sage Gheranda was born, but his teachings were propagated in the north-eastern region of India and seem to have been unknown in the south.

The yoga taught in *Gheranda Samhita* is known as *saptanga yoga*, seven limbs of yoga. There is no rule that yoga must have a certain number of limbs. In other yogic texts *ashtanga yoga*, eightfold yoga or eight-limbed yoga, is described. In

both *Hatharatnavali*, authored by the great yoga exponent Srinivasa Bhatta, and the *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* of Yogi Swatmarama, four limbs of yoga are given. In *Goraksha Ashtakam*, written by Sage Gorakhnath, *shashtanga yoga*, six limbs of yoga, are described.

According to the needs of an age and its society, varying traditions of yoga come into vogue. Another possible reason for these variances is that in earlier times it was thought that the practices of yoga were meant only for saints, sages, great souls, renunciates and those who were not attached to worldly desires. In that exalted state they may not have been required to perfect the preliminary *yamas*, self-restraints, and *niyamas*, self-observances, of yoga. Therefore, yama and niyama were not included in many of the texts. However, at a later stage sages added the yamas and niyamas to the definition of yoga, as with the changing times ordinary people had started displaying an interest in yoga.

In *Gheranda Samhita*, the cleansing practices for the body, called *shatkarma*, are discussed first. The main ones are: *neti*, nasal cleansing, *dhauti*, cleansing of the head and the entire alimentary canal from the mouth to the anus, *basti*, cleansing the large intestine, *nauli*, massaging and strengthening the abdominal muscles and organs, *kapalbhati*, a type of pranayama, and *trataka*, a method of concentrating the mind. These are considered to be the six purificatory techniques of hatha yoga. Sage Gheranda considered these practices for cleansing the body to be the first dimension of yoga.

Next, *asanas* are discussed; Sage Gheranda mainly describes postures which make the body strong and stable. The aim, after ensuring complete control over the body, is to attain a stage in which there is no physical discomfort or pain.

In the third dimension Sage Gheranda discusses twenty-five *mudras* with which the flow of prana inside the body can be controlled. He believes that *prana*, energy, produces heat and energy inside the body. In higher sadhana, when a

person sits in an asana for long durations, the body generates heat; the body temperature only drops if the prana shakti is not controlled inside the body, so that the energy is lost. With the practice of mudras, however, the *prana shakti* or energy is withdrawn inside the body and not allowed to dissipate. Sage Gheranda describes the mudras so that one can retain the prana inside the body.

After mudras, pratyahara is described as the fourth dimension. First the body is purified and disorders removed. Next, stability in asana is achieved. The prana is then balanced and controlled through mudras. In *pratyahara*, the senses are controlled and the mind becomes internalized in a natural way. Sage Gheranda believes that in the state of pratyahara, when the mind is becoming internalized and one-pointed, it is easy to awaken the pranas. In that subtle state no effort is required to awaken the pranas and internalize the mind. After pratyahara, experiences at the subtle level, perception of the subtle universe, come in a natural way and one is able to awaken the prana.

Sage Gheranda includes pranayama as the fifth dimension. Generally in the practice of *pranayama*, the incoming and outgoing breaths are counted and the duration of inhalation and exhalation is equalized. Sage Gheranda follows this tradition, but mantras are used instead of counting. All the pranayama practices mentioned in *Gheranda Samhita* are practised with mantra. By including mantras, Sage Gheranda makes the practice of pranayama more powerful. When the mantra is chanted with the breath, the effect of its vibrations is felt, increasing concentration and producing pranic energy. Through the combined effect of pratyahara and pranayama one has control of this awakened energy; it does not become uncontrolled.

Thereafter, *dhyana*, meditation, is included as the sixth dimension. When the prana is awakened and the mind is internalized, meditation arises by itself. Sage Gheranda mentions three types of meditation: *bahiranga dhyana*, external meditation, *antaranga dhyana*, inner meditation,

and *ekachitta dhyana*, one-pointed meditation. In external meditation there is awareness of the experiences created by the universe and senses, in inner meditation of the experiences created in the subtle mental levels, and in one-pointed meditation inner realization is awakened.

In the seventh dimension, *samadhi*, deep meditation, is described, and vital hints are given on how to enter that dimension.

Sage Gheranda gives his seven limbs of yoga another name: ghatastha yoga. *Ghatastha yoga* means yoga based on the body. *Ghata* means *sharira*, body; it also means pot or pitcher. He has observed the body in the form of a mud pot, which is given a shape with the help of matter and contains whatever God has filled it with: senses, mind, knowledge, wisdom, ego – all of which makes it one's pitcher.

For self-realization, therefore, Sage Gheranda's ghatastha yoga begins with the body, and through the medium of the body, by controlling the mental and emotional levels, spiritual realization is awakened. This is his belief.



PRAYER

आदीश्वराय प्रणमामि तस्मै, येनोपदिष्टा हठयोग विद्या ।
विराजते प्रोन्नतराजयोगमारोढुमिच्छोरधिरोहिणीव ॥

*Aadishvaraya pranamami tasmai, yenopadishta hathayoga vidya;
Virajate pronatrajayoga marodumichchhordhirohineeava.*

I bow to the Creator, who gave these spiritual instructions regarding knowledge of hatha yoga which blooms in the form of raja yoga. Knowledge of hatha yoga serves as a ladder for those aspirants who wish to attain that stage.

Chapter One

Prologue & Shatkarma

Prologue

Verse 1

एकदा चण्डकापालिर्गत्वा घेरण्डकुट्टिरम् ।
प्रणम्य विनयाद्भक्त्या घेरण्डं परिपृच्छति ॥ 1 ॥

*Ekadaa chandakaapaalirgatvaa gherandakuttiram;
Pranamy vinayaadbhakt्या gherandam pariprichchhati.*

Once, King Chandakapali went to the hermitage of Sage Gheranda and, after prostrating before him with due humility and devotion, asked him a question.

Verse 2

घटस्थयोगं योगेश तत्त्वज्ञानस्य कारणम् ।
इदानीं श्रोतुमिच्छामि योगेश्वर वद प्रभो ॥ 2 ॥

*Ghatasthayogam yogesha tattvajnaanasya kaaranam;
Idaaneem shrotumichchhaami yogeshvara vada prabho.*

O Yogeshwara, god of yoga! I wish to learn ghatastha yoga, which is a means to self-realization. O Yogeshwara! O Lord! Kindly tell me about this.

Sage Gheranda is addressed by the king as *Yogeshwara*, the god of yoga, thus acknowledging him as the founder of yoga and the teacher of yoga. King Chandakapali then asks Sage

Gheranda to explain to him the teachings of ghatastha yoga by which a person can attain self-realization.

Chandakapali was a king. In spite of being a king, he went to Sage Gheranda and asked him the question: “How can yoga, which is based on the body, help us to know the final truth?” *Ghatasthayogam yogesha tattvajnaanasya kaaranam*. Actually four questions are included here. First, what is self-realization? Second, what is ghatastha yoga? Third, how should this yoga be practised? And fourth, is it possible to attain knowledge through yoga?

Ghatastha yoga

The first question is: what is self-realization? How can this be understood? *Tattwa* means reality. *Tattwajnana* means knowledge of that reality or truth which is behind the human body, mind and soul. How can that be understood? This is the first question of all philosophers. What is the aim and purpose of human life?

While one is alive and while prana is inside the body, life is enjoyed and in the process of enjoying life the consciousness is externalized. Due to this externalized state, the internal life cannot be controlled and balanced. *Tattwajnana* means knowledge of the final truth, or *atmajnana*, knowledge and realization of the self which is responsible for this body and for this universe. Attainment of *tattwajnana* or *atmajnana* depicts another state of life which not only provides external experience, but gives the experience of balance, control and harmony between the external and internal life.

The second question is: what is ghatastha yoga? *Ghata* means mud pot or pitcher. When imagining a pot, a form made out of clay appears on the mental screen. Its external form is seen, but what it contains is unknown. Maybe the pitcher is empty, maybe it is filled with water, maybe it is filled with grain. It can contain anything, but there is only knowledge of its external form. *Ghatastha yoga* is yoga based on the body.

One sees the body, experiences the body and confronts its various diseases. In order to make it happy and contented, *purusharthas* and *karmas*, efforts and actions to attain a goal, are performed. When the body feels cold, one wears clothes. When it feels hot, the clothes are removed and the fan is switched on. When the body needs to rest, one sleeps. All these external activities of the body are experienced, but what are the other elements inside the body? No one knows. What are the different energies inside the body? Why does one perform *karmas* in one's life? Why does one think? No one knows.

The creation of the body has taken place by a strange coincidence. One may say that coincidence is nature, Brahman or God. What is that energy which has constructed the body, and awakened other energies inside the body? It is essential to learn about the subtle as well as the physical or gross elements that are responsible for building the body. When yogic practices based on the body are begun, this process of subtle understanding also begins. The practices have a direct effect on the mind, calming the mental activities. The effect of physical yoga is felt in the mind. Once mental peace is attained, the *karmas* and *samskaras* can be performed harmoniously. When both the physical and subtle elements are understood, it can be said that *ghatastha* yoga is commencing.

The third question is: how is this yoga to be practised? In fact, how a person should go about the yogic practices is the subject of this whole book.

The fourth question is: what is the result? Is it possible to attain self-realization through yogic practices? Attainment is the result. If yoga is practised, one will definitely benefit from the effects. How much is achieved depends on each person's capacity to prepare for and undertake their *sadhana*. Only then can the result be known. However, the rule of nature is that there has to be a result from each *karma* or action. Waving a hand in the air creates a result, which is secret. If a mosquito lands on the body, a wave of the hand will cause the mosquito to fly away. This is a

gross, external result, but it has a subtle result as well, which is the creation of sound. One is unaware of this result. It can be called a subtle effect or secret result that friction is taking place between matter (the hand) and air. A sound is produced, but it is not heard. If the ears were capable of hearing very subtle sounds, perhaps that sound would be heard. Similarly, with yogic practices, subtle or secret results are created which will be experienced, but may not be noticed or understood with one's current level of wisdom.

Sage Gheranda drew attention to the scientific and critical aspects of yoga by using many metaphors and comparisons, such as calling his system ghatastha yoga. Sage Gheranda said:

Verse 3

साधु साधु महाबाहो यन्मां त्वं परिपृच्छसि ।
कथयामि च ते वत्स सावधानोऽवधारय ॥ ३ ॥

*Saadhu saadhu mahaabaaho yanmaam tvam pariprichchasi;
Kathayaami cha te vatsa saavadhaano'vadhaaraya.*

O Mahabaho! I appreciate your question. O dear child, I will explain to you the subject you are keen to learn about. Listen carefully to acquire this knowledge.

By accepting the king in this way, Sage Gheranda ignored an old belief. In that age it was not the normal practice for worldly people and householders to want to learn yogic practices, self-realization and knowledge of the self. This path was meant only for saints and sannyasins. Here it is clear, however, that a king has come for spiritual knowledge. The king has been addressed as *Mahabaho*, which has several meanings such as: 'he who has power in his arms', and 'he who protects his people and looks after them'. The king was a king, of course, and a householder as well, yet he was also a *mumukshu*, a seeker of liberation. He had the desire to attain *moksha*, liberation, so he came to the sage seeking knowledge of yoga.

Who is suitable for yoga?

This verse tells us that such a person is suitable for yoga. *Saadhu saadhu mahaabaaho*, Sage Gherand says, “It is very good that you have adopted this path. You have expressed your aim, and knowledge of yoga is imparted to one who is eager to know himself. Only a person who performs purushartha and sadhana in order to know himself is called a yogi.”

A common definition of *yoga* is union between the individual consciousness and the cosmic consciousness. In this process a human being first becomes a sadhaka, not a yogi. The four stages are: *jignasu*, seeker; *sadhaka*, devotee; *yogi*, one who attains truth and knowledge, whose foremost aim is to gain knowledge and understand the inner truth, whether he is a householder, saint or sannyasin; and a *jivanmukta*, liberated soul. Curiosity arises in everyone’s mind. Every human being at one time or another wonders about the purpose of life, but due to disinclination or aversion, the quest is usually forgotten. However, some will keep the aim in mind and perform their sadhana; they comprise the sadhaka group.

It needs to be remembered that sadhana can be done in many ways. Yoga and tantra are the only two ancient teachings or sciences in which various practices and techniques are taught in order to know each and every stage of one’s life. The practices include the body, mind and higher knowledge, but were only followed by renunciates, sannyasins and saints. In a householder’s life sadhana was limited to the conduct of dharma, *dharmacharan*, and this is still a commonly held belief in some parts of society. If the average person in India is asked whether he does sadhana, he will reply that every morning he lights three sticks of incense in front of his deity, lights a lamp and recites one or two mantras. That is his sadhana.

According to yoga, however, that is only one aspect of sadhana. This broader understanding of sadhana is expressed in the *Mahabharata*, *Ramayana*, *Yoga Vasishtha*, *Vedas* and other literary works: *Shareeraamadhyam khalu*

dharmasaadhanam, through the medium of the body a human being can fulfil all his duties, obligations and dharmas. However, this concept is not properly understood. Again and again people interpret it as meaning that a person should make an effort and do some purushartha through the medium of the body in order to reach God. But how is this to be done? Through yoga. When a devotee and follower of dharma adopts yoga, he becomes a yogi.

Practical aims of a yogi

The first practical aim of a yogi is to understand one's own personality, which includes the body, mind, emotions and intellect. The second practical aim is to awaken one's inner powers. If all the unconscious parts of the brain can be used, the intellect will have no limit and man can become a superman. Yoga and tantra have always stated that the unconscious inner energies should be awakened.

The third practical aim of a yogi is to serve society. After attaining some ability through yoga, one should contribute to the development and maintenance of society. During this time, sadhana continues without ceasing. In this way, through a balanced blend of karma and knowledge, the fourth state is achieved, which is moksha or liberation.

King Chandakapali appears before Sage Gheranda as a devotee, as a seeker. Sage Gheranda is a yogi, who explains to him the path of yoga.

Verse 4

नास्ति मायासमः पाशो नास्ति योगात्परं बलम् ।
नास्ति ज्ञानात्परो बन्धुर्नाहङ्कारात्परो रिपुः ॥४॥

*Naasti maayaasamah paasho naasti yogaatparam balam;
Naasti jnaanaatparo bandhurnaahankaaraatparo ripuh.*

There is no fetter like delusion and there is no force as powerful as yoga. There is no greater friend than knowledge and no foe worse than ego.

Sage Gheranda has selected four subjects in order to explain yoga. The first one is delusion and sin. Delusion is identified here as a fetter, a sin, because its existence is temporary, it is false and it is the symbol of ignorance. When one lives in ignorance, one remains under the spell of delusion; overpowered by it, one runs after pleasure and enjoyment. Becoming engrossed in worldly pleasures and forgetting oneself and the meaning of one's existence due to ignorance is considered to be a sin, and its cause is delusion. That is why Sage Gheranda says, *Naasti maayaa samah paasho*, there is no other fetter as wicked as delusion in this universe.

Power of yoga

Naasti yogaatparam balam means there is no force as powerful as yoga. Sage Gheranda has visualized yoga in the form of energy through which life's shortcomings can be eradicated, because through its force the whole personality, the body, mind, intellect, thoughts, emotions and behaviour, can be brought under control, moderated and balanced. Possibly there is no other science in the world which works for the development of the body, mind and consciousness in such an integrated manner. Modern educational systems teach nothing about such a science. Sit-ups, a morning run or a few physical exercises or games in a gymnasium are recommended to develop the body while classroom education only develops the intellect, not the whole mind. To rid the body of physical ailments many systems of medicine are available, such as allopathy, homeopathy and ayurveda, but these systems regard the body as matter and treat it accordingly. Psychology has developed some methods for the treatment of mental disorders, but they are still in the experimental stage. The ideas of modern psychology are only about two hundred years old, with much of the development taking place since Freud and Jung.

There is no education available today for developing the whole personality. If one were to visit all the nations of the world and examine the systems available, no method for

comprehensive personality development would be found. There was a time in India when students were taught methods of developing the personality, but in modern times this system has been lost. Through the medium of yoga, however, thorough development of the personality can be achieved. Physical disorders can be healed by simple methods, the mind can be developed and wisdom attained by awakening the intuition. For this reason Sage Gheranda says that there is no force greater than yoga in the universe. Through yoga one can develop oneself, not only in relation to the gross world, but also to attain and use subtle inner experiences.

Knowledge is a true friend

Naasti jnaanaatparo bandhuh means there is no greater friend than knowledge in this world. In the most difficult of situations, knowledge is the only force that can really help. There is a story which illustrates this truth. Two men passing through the forest met a bear. One man ran and climbed up a tree. The second man did not know how to climb. Suddenly it struck him that bears do not disturb dead bodies, so he immediately lay down on the ground and played dead. The bear came up, sniffed him for a few minutes and prodded him here and there. The man remained completely motionless, like a dead person, keeping control over his mind. After some time the bear became disturbed. It thought, "What is the use of killing him? He is already dead." With this thought, it went on its way.

After some time the first man climbed down from the tree and asked his friend, "What did the bear say in your ear?" because when the bear had been sniffing the body, it had felt everything, including the head and ears. The second man replied that the bear had told him never to believe in friends who do not help one in the time of need. In this story the human friend did not help, but knowledge did. This is why knowledge is considered to be a true friend.

One person may not help another in their utmost difficulty, but knowledge will always help. Knowledge dispels ignorance.

All the difficulties that arise in life exist due to ignorance. Yoga does not believe that a person is overcome by difficulties in life due to destiny. Yoga says that if one has purushartha or capacity, one can remain happy in all conditions.

Ego is the enemy

Naahankaaraatparō ripuh means that ego is the root cause of all shortcomings. Everyone likes to think they are blessed with the best qualities, and this self-image of being the best and knowing everything tends to be maintained. One thinks that one's work is always correct, one's thoughts are always right, one's principles are the best. Not wanting to bow down before anyone is a common tendency in human beings. It is *ahamkara*, ego. The ego becomes the biggest enemy in a person's life. It is an obstacle to friendship and it suppresses the learning process because a person cannot adjust to changing circumstances.

Generation after generation remain conservative and unable to change their thinking. Such people are unable to change with the times. The veil of ego in front of their eyes prevents the mind from developing, and they have false pride in their ability. This is why delusion and ego are considered to be a sin and an enemy, while yoga and knowledge are regarded as one's energy and friend in life.

From this point onwards, education in yoga begins: how one can utilize yogic power through practice, make knowledge one's friend, be free from sin and keep the foe in the form of ego at a distance.

Complete vision

This is the first teaching of Sage Gheranda. The shortcomings in an individual's life can be discovered by contemplating and meditating on these four subjects. In this world, whether in the modern or ancient era, knowledge, delusion, ego and yoga (the efforts that people make to become prosperous are referred to here as yoga) are important topics.

It seems that the meaning of delusion in this context is the false knowledge or ignorance by which everyone is bound. In practice, *maya* or delusion takes the form of narrow-mindedness and *ahamkara* or ego, considering one's thoughts and principles to be the best, and there is attraction towards the sensual pleasures of samsara, the phenomenal world. This tendency becomes a big enemy. By examining the ego closely, it can be seen as narrow-mindedness. One knows this to be true, because when the consciousness of an individual is broad and comprehensive, the effect of the ego is controlled to some extent.

Knowledge and yoga are seen in the form of a friend and an energy. There are many forms of knowledge. For example, the earliest human beings who lived and hunted in the forests and mountains devised and made weapons like spears and bows; this is an external manifestation of knowledge through which they experienced an inner sense of security and self-satisfaction, and were able to face all kinds of difficult situations.

At one time knowledge was mainly external; at another time it meant inner knowledge. In the present era knowledge is accepted as both internal and external. In accordance with the needs of today there should be coordination and realization of both the external and internal experiences of knowledge. Only then can the infinite energy hidden in the personality be experienced and awakened.

Yoga is seen here as an energy or force. Another name for yoga is purushartha, self-effort. When an effort at self-attainment is made, that becomes a form of yoga *sadhana*, yoga practice. Yoga means to unite. Purushartha and sadhana are uniting forces. Purushartha and sadhana are the *shaktis*, the inner powers or energies of human beings.

Verse 5

अभ्यासात्कादिवर्णानां यथाशास्त्राणि बोधयेत् ।
तथा योगं समासाद्य तत्त्वज्ञानं च लभ्यते ॥ 5 ॥

*Abhyaasaatkaadivarnaanaam yathaa shaastraani bodhayet;
Tathaa yogam samaasaadhya tattvajnaanam cha labhyate.*

Just as by practising the letters of the alphabet in sequence, knowledge of all the scriptures is possible, similarly, by mastering yoga, self-realization is achieved.

A child who has never learned the letters of the alphabet cannot write sentences correctly and cannot read. Other children who start at the beginning and learn the alphabet, the vowels and consonants, forming words and sentences, reading and writing, gradually, with sequential education, become proficient. With this knowledge they can read and learn from the scriptures, the sciences and can develop in all aspects of general education. Sage Gheranda is using similes and metaphors to give directions: after dedicated sequential yoga practice, attainment or self-realization is possible.

An aspirant needs to make gradual progress. It is simply not practical to expect a PhD dissertation from a child studying at primary level. In the same way, problems arise when a person who does not know the ABC of yoga tries to awaken their kundalini. Without a foundation of knowledge, how can atomic science be understood? Forcing oneself in this way will lead to a negative result. The first requirement, therefore, is to gain an understanding of one's basic physical, mental and psychological interactions before embarking on the yogic path.

Sequential progress

Sage Gheranda says that yoga should be practised sequentially. By adhering to sequential practice, self-realization will gradually be achieved. One needs to be conversant with the physical, mental, intellectual, psychological and internal activities of the body and mind.

Once this foundation is in place, deeper understanding and experience are necessary, and only then does the state of self-realization come. If a person who does not know how to swim zealously jumps into deep water after seeing someone swimming there, he will simply drown. Such action indicates ignorance. Sage Gheranda spells out the method to overcome this lack of discrimination. He advises seekers to progress gradually, step by step, from the very beginning in order to learn and understand everything correctly.

It is the same in practical life. If one proceeds slowly, step by step, one will make continual progress and not become fatigued. Otherwise what happens? One runs fast at the start and then stops due to tiredness, which is of no use. So one should begin the practice of yoga with an understanding of the practicalities of life and one's own capacity, not merely due to the prompting of desire. After all, human beings desire many things that they can never achieve in life.

Verse 6

सुकृतैर्दुष्कृतैः कार्यैर्जायते प्राणिनां घटः ।
घटादुत्पद्यते कर्म घटीयन्त्रं यथा भ्रमेत् ॥६॥

*Sukritairdushkritaih kaaryairjaayate praaninaam ghatah;
Ghataadutpadhyate karma ghateeyantram yathaa bhramet.*

The bodies (ghata) of all living beings are born out of good and bad deeds. The body creates karmas which in turn create the body.

The body of a human being is born as a result of good and bad karmas and samskaras. Karmas are created by the body and this cycle goes on continuously, just like a water wheel operated by bullocks keeps drawing water out of a well.

Verse 7

उर्ध्वाधोभ्रमतेयद्वत् घटीयन्त्रं गवां वशात् ।
तद्वत्कर्मवशाज्जीवो भ्रमते जन्ममृत्युभिः ॥ ७ ॥

*Urdhvaadho bhramate yadvat ghateeyantram gavaam vashaat;
Tadvatkarmavashajjeevo bhramate janmamrityubhih.*

Just as the vessels (ghata) attached to the water wheel keep moving up and down according to the movement of the bullocks, similarly a living being also keeps on revolving in the cycle of birth and death in this universe due to his past actions.

Just as a water wheel rotated by bullocks keeps on moving, similarly a living being also keeps on wandering and revolving in the states of birth and death due to his karmas.

Action and rebirth are complementary to each other. Birth and death are complementary to each other. If one believes the principle of rebirth, the principle of action can be defined. Sage Gheranda says here that a human body is born due to good and bad deeds, and that a person performs virtuous or evil deeds in every life. There is no doubt about this truth. One's karmas or deeds give rise to *samskaras*, the influences of previous births.

There is no doubt that everyone is responsible for their own happiness and grief. Everyone experiences this in their lives. Unhappiness is felt when a situation gives rise to inner tension or suffering. However, in the same situation it is possible to remain controlled and balanced, and not allow oneself to be unhappy. Everyone is responsible for their own state of happiness. This does not mean accidental events, but the current, ongoing reactions and actions of an individual.

Every action or karma has a result, but it is difficult to know which form that result will take. A wish or desire alone sometimes gives rise to the capacity to perform an act. When the act is performed, its result appears in front of

the individual. Sometimes the result is noticed immediately; this is known as immediate or instant karma. At other times one has to wait. It can also be said that a person is born as a result of his past desires, actions and transformations. This discussion concerns physical birth, but the concept is also relevant within this life. One's desires today are related to old desires or actions. One may not be aware of it, as the desire or action may be at the unconscious level, but there is certainly a connection between the past and the present.

People who believe in religion, action, sin, virtue and so on may think that performing auspicious actions destroys old sinful actions. But this does not happen. The old stamp which exists cannot be eradicated because whatever actions or deeds are performed control one's body, mind and thinking process; they govern one's life. Auspicious acts do not destroy old sins, but they give birth to a new samskara, a new constructive, positive thought.

Desire and action are both very strong forces. A yogi, who was an accomplished sage, lay on his death bed looking at a tree. On the tree he saw a beautiful apple being eaten by an insect. He indicated to his disciple that he wanted the apple. He had the desire to eat the apple before dying, but he breathed his last before the apple was brought to him. When the yogi passed away, the disciple noticed that one finger was still pointing towards the apple. The disciple thought, "My guru is entrapped in that desire." He was an accomplished disciple. He meditated and found that his guru had been reborn as an insect in that apple. He fetched the apple and when the insect was fully satisfied after eating the fruit, he killed it, and his guru's finger became normal. This is merely a story, but it illustrates the potential power of desire.

A similar incident took place with Lord Krishna. Krishna and Arjuna were strolling along a river bank. They saw a fisherman pulling in a net full of fish. Arjuna asked Krishna, "In your opinion is the fisherman committing a sin by killing many living beings? After all, a fish is also a living being." Krishna replied, "Yes, he will have to experience the result."

Some time later, while passing through a forest, they saw a half-dead elephant covered with thousands of ants. Arjuna asked, “Lord, you know everything. Tell me for which sin of which birth is this elephant undergoing such suffering? He is not able to die even though thousands of ants are eating his body.” Krishna said, “You remember that fisherman? After death he was reborn as an elephant. The ants that are eating him today are the same fish that he killed in his previous birth.” This story explains that whatever action is performed, one must undergo the consequences.

The results may be undergone during the present birth or in another birth. For example, if a box of pins is dropped, it would be wise not to just leave it and walk away, but to immediately look for the pins, trying not to miss a single one. This is an immediate action. A mistake was made, so the pins should be picked up at once. Alternatively, the results may be delayed.

In this verse Sage Gheranda says that a person is born out of both virtuous and evil deeds. Nevertheless, right thinking, behaviour and action in the present birth decide one’s future fate for the better, and the result follows. This is not an unscientific idea because when life becomes controlled, balanced and positive, negative samskaras or karmas are not created. To accomplish this balance, the yogic path must be adopted.

Verse 8

आमकुम्भ इवाम्भस्थो जीर्यमाणः सदा घटः ।
योगानलेन संदह्य घटशुद्धिं समाचरेत् ॥८॥

*Aamakumbha ivaambhastho jeeryamaanah sadaa ghatah;
Yogaanalena sandahya ghatashuddhim samaacharet.*

The body invariably decays like an unbaked earthen pot placed in water; strengthen and purify the body in the fire of yoga.

If an unbaked mud pot is filled with water, it will break down and eventually disintegrate, but if the pot is fired and hardened, and then filled with water, it will neither dissolve nor be destroyed. The body of a human being needs to be understood in the same way: this body can only be matured in the fire of yoga; yogic practices are essential to fully develop the body. Through this example, Sage Gheranda explains that if the body is tempered in the fire of yoga, the energy produced in the body will first purify it and then develop its capacities. What does the body need to be capable of? What is the role of this body? To start with, this needs to be understood. Then one must take one's thinking to the spiritual level and ask how the body can contribute to spiritual development.

The purity of the body referred to here does not only mean a clean and pure physical body. It means attaining inner purity by purifying the body. *Yogaanalena sandahya ghatashuddhim samaacharet*, the energy produced by yoga practices is called the glow or fire of yoga. Through the medium of this fire, disorders are removed from the body, purifying and strengthening it. By attaining a pure physical state, the mind also becomes pure. Yoga does not believe that the body and mind are two different elements; instead it teaches that the body and mind are very closely related. Disorders in the body create disorders in the mind and disorders in the mind create disorders in the body. Physical diseases create mental disorders and mental disorders create physical diseases. Therefore, when the body is purified through yoga practices, a pure state of mind occurs automatically. When the body and mind are under control, when disorders of the body and mind are absent, one becomes capable of struggle.

Internal balance

Generally, struggle is understood to mean fighting, but here it means the ability to be positive, to stay cool even in adverse situations. Struggle does not mean that if one is unhappy, all one's efforts are put into banishing or fighting

the unhappiness, because that type of effort only creates more tension. The attainment of this capacity signifies a pure state in the body and mind, without any disorders. In the absence of disorders, the mental capacity is sharp.

Generally, people pursue physical pleasure or follow thought processes through which they seek to advance themselves. Because of the effort they put into it, they naturally come to expect success. When there is failure instead, disappointment follows. Sage Gheranda explains why in normal life a person feels tired, physically, mentally and emotionally, but a yogi does not feel tired. Here tiredness does not mean the way the body feels after physical labour. It means *virakti*, disinterest.

Many people say that they are tired of fighting with life. There is no interest in doing anything; the mind does not like anything, as if there is no desire left. Sometimes this state of tiredness is so deep that there is no interest in the family, eating, reading, writing and so on. Lack of interest is evident in every field of life. However, there is no such lack of interest in the dictionary of yogis.

These deep feelings of exhaustion and disinterest are created when the past keeps revolving in the mind side by side with concern about the future. When the past is related with the future and not with the present, a state of *virakti*, indifference or disinterest, is created. A yogi remains unaffected by such physical and mental activities. When physical and mental purity are attained, this affects the inner self, the *antahkarana*. *Ahamkara*, *buddhi* and *chitta* are the three main components of the *antahkarana*.

Therefore, when these states of purity affect the *antahkarana*, *buddhi*, intellect, also changes. The intellect, which normally keeps running after sensual pleasures, spontaneously experiences self-control. A person only runs after worldly pleasures when there are defects present within, such as lust or desire, but when positive qualities are created within, a positive intellect is also created. In a pure state, negative elements do not exist.

In *atma shuddhi*, inner purity, the limiting elements simply cease to exist and the ego is extinguished as control over it is achieved. Sage Gheranda has explained the same inner purity as purity of the *ghata*, the physical pitcher and its subtle contents. Up to this point the significance of yoga has been discussed. From here on, the practices are described.

Verse 9

शोधनं दृढता चैव स्थैर्यं धैर्यं च लाघवम् ।
प्रत्यक्षं च निर्लिप्तं च घटस्य सप्तसाधनम् ॥ 9 ॥

*Shodhanam dridhataa chaiva sthairyam dhairyam cha laaghavam;
Pratyaksham cha nirliptam cha ghatasya saptasaadhanam.*

Purification, firmness, steadiness, patience, lightness, inner perception and non-involvement are the seven sadhanas for the ghata.

Sage Gheranda says that it is essential to possess seven qualities for the practice of ghatastha yoga, and to acquire them seven types of yogic practices are important. In raja yoga, Sage Patanjali describes *ashtanga yoga*, the eight limbs of yoga: yama, niyama, asana, pranayama, pratyahara, dharana, dhyana and samadhi. By describing his seven sadhanas, Sage Gheranda takes the basic elements of ashtanga yoga and describes them in the form of seven needs.

Shodhanam

The first is *shodhanam*, which means purification. In order to make the body and mind free from disease and disorders, purification is very important.

Dridhata

The second is *dridhata*, meaning firm or unshaken. Some people understand this to mean power or energy and others consider it to mean mental force. The purpose for

which it has been used here is not only physical, but mental, intellectual and emotional as well.

Consider the attempts made during practice sessions to make the body strong and steady, the efforts made to bring clarity to the thinking process. With firmness and the power of one's resolve one attempts to make life complete. In the same manner, Sage Gheranda says that it is important for a person to achieve the quality of firmness in order to purify the self, to keep on practising patiently until the result shows steadiness. Here *dridhata* could mean moving with a *sankalpa*, adopting a resolution and remaining firm in it.

Sthairyam

The third quality is *sthairyam*, steadiness. In his *Yoga Sutras* (2:46), Sage Patanjali describes steadiness pertaining to the body as *sthiraasukhamaasanam*, which means steady, comfortable posture. During the practice of asana a person should remain steady. There should be no difficulty, tension or pain. Asanas should be performed in a relaxed manner. The same objective is referred to here. It is essential to achieve physical steadiness because if the body is restless, it will not allow the mind to be one-pointed. Steadiness is seen in the form of a quality or need. How to attain this state of steadiness is explained later.

Dhairyam

The fourth means is *dhairyam*, patience. It is also a quality which means one remains unaffected by situations, does not lose patience, does not become distressed and does not lose tolerance. It is a mental quality, because it is the mind, not the body, which loses patience.

Laghavam

The fifth means or need is *laghavam*, lightness. In the context of normal life and the qualities needed for yoga, a yogi's body should remain light; it should not be too heavy, or have fat. A fat body is considered unsuitable for yoga because it is

believed that being overweight is a cause of disease. It does not mean, however, that people who are fat cannot become yogis.

Fat is caused by uncontrolled eating, which leads to a build up of bodily disorders. According to medical science there is a healthy physical state for a body, and when that state is departed from, the body develops disorders. Disorders in the blood, muscles and ligaments begin to develop, possibly leading to serious illness such as a heart attack. Excessive weight can cause joint discomfort, heart problems or high blood pressure. As the conditions compound, a person becomes more susceptible to other problems, such as ulcers and hernia. Therefore, for a yoga practitioner it is essential to have a light body in the beginning, otherwise yoga cannot be perfected.

Once yoga is perfected and one goes beyond the experience of the body, one does not have to worry about the physical state. In fact, often when pranic energy awakens, it concentrates at manipura chakra and the abdomen grows. Such yogis eat hardly any heavy foods, such as ghee. Many only eat fruits. In such yogis the expansion of manipura chakra is the awakening of prana, it is not a disorder in the body. Therefore, it may be observed that many accomplished saints or yogis have big bellies. However, in the beginning the body should be thin.

Pratyaksham

Pratyaksha is the sixth quality. Here *pratyaksha* does not refer to the pratyaksha of Samkhya philosophy, but to the nature of acceptance, that is, whatever subtle or internal experiences there are must be kept clear before the inner mental vision. Pratyaksham comes from *prati*, a prefix indicating the opposite or confrontation to the word it precedes, and *aksham*, meaning eyes, to see.

This state of pratyaksha is not the state of *laya*, dissolution, where one does not see anything. Neither is it a state of sensual experience. On the contrary, it is a state in

which one sees an inner experience, feels it and establishes oneself in it.

Take this example from normal life. Imagine putting a *rasgulla*, a sweet made from cheese and syrup, in the mouth. Now close the eyes and experience its taste while eating it. The taste of cheese will vanish, the taste of syrup will disappear, and only one taste will remain, which is neither cheese nor syrup. With the experience of this taste, one will exclaim, “It is so delicious!” ‘Delicious’ refers not to cheese or syrup, but to the taste of the *rasgulla*, that third element which has been created through the union of both cheese and syrup. It is subtle, it cannot be seen. It is not experienced in cheese or in syrup, but it is present and is experienced within. If one brings forth this experience, that is *pratyaksha* or acceptance.

Nirliptam

The seventh quality is *nirlipta*. Many people understand *nirlipta* to mean *samadhi*, but the true sense of the word is a state of disinterest, a state of being unattached, where there is non-involvement of the mind. Being involved is what happens when a fly goes deep into raw sugar, *gur*, immerses its wings, and is unable to get out. *Nirlipta* is when the mind is not involved. Until this point one is always attached to life, the body, thinking, emotion, passion and disorder. One must go beyond this continuous attachment to become established in self-knowledge, which is a state of non-involvement, free from the gravitational force which attracts us to the world.

Verses 10–11

षट्कर्मणा शोधनं च आसनेन भवेद्दृढम् ।
मुद्रया स्थिरता चैव प्रत्याहारेण धीरता ॥ 10 ॥
प्राणायामाल्लाघवं च ध्यानात्प्रत्यक्षमात्मनः ।
समाधिना निर्लिप्तं च मुक्तिरेव न संशयः ॥ 11 ॥

*Shatkarmanaa shodhanam cha aasanena bhaveddridham;
Mudrayaa sthirataa chaiva pratyahaarena dheerataa. (10)*

*Praanaayaamaallaaghavam cha dhyaanaatpratyakshamaatmanah;
Samaadhinaa nirliptam cha muktireva na samshayah. (11)*

Through shatkarmas, purification of the body is achieved; through asanas, firmness; through mudras, steadiness; and through pratyahara, patience is achieved. Through pranayama, agility or lightness is achieved; through meditation, self-realization; and through samadhi, non-involvement or detachment and, undoubtedly, liberation, are achieved.

According to Sage Gheranda, for a devotee these seven qualities are essential: purification, firmness, steadiness, patience, lightness of body, the nature of acceptance and non-involvement. In order to incorporate these seven qualities, there are seven types of yogic practices, which are enumerated below.

Shatkarma

Shatkarmanan shodhanam: through shatkarmas a state of purification is achieved. Shatkarma includes six types of practices through which the body can be made free from disease, clean and pure.

Asana

Aasanena bhaveddridham: by practising asanas, physical strength or firmness is achieved. It must be noted that gaining physical energy or power through asanas does not

mean gaining muscular power. It is not like doing sit-ups or other purely physical exercises in order to make the body like that of a wrestler. Here, firmness or strength means physical capacity, inner strength and gaining good health. After all, one can be big and strong but still become ill. Here, there is a subtle relationship between attaining physical and mental health and strength through asanas after purification through shatkarmas.

Mudras and the flow of prana

Mudrayaa sthirataa chaiva: by practising *mudras* or gestures, stability is attained. This means that the wavering mind and the prana are controlled. Gestures can be understood as different physical states through which the pranic energy can be focused.

Kirlian photography is a technique which shows the aura or energy field around a part of the body. Research has shown that there is a greater flow of pranic energy from the extreme ends of the body such as the hands, feet and head. In a Kirlian photograph an excessive flow of pranic energy is seen from the fingers and feet, but not from the back, thighs and calves. Yoga also teaches this. Mudras stop the flow of pranic energy out of the body, rechannelling it back into the body again.

There are many types of mudras for the hands and feet. Only two hand mudras will be described at this stage. In *jnana mudra*, the hands are placed palms downward on the knees with the index finger curled into the root of the thumb. This causes the energy, which is continuously flowing out of the index finger, to re-enter the body. *Chin mudra* is similar to *jnana mudra*, but the palms face upwards. When these mudras are practised, the prana is pulled back into the body, especially when sitting in *padmasana* or *siddhasana*.

There are also other types of mudras, for example, *shambhavi mudra*, gazing at the eyebrow centre with both eyes, and *nasikagra drishti*, gazing down at the nosetip. The uncontrolled activities of both prana and mind cease with

mudras and become steady. With the practice of mudras, the mind quickly becomes focused and internalized.

Pratyahara

Pratyaaahaarena dheerata, through pratyahara practices patience is achieved. In pratyahara, one first learns to focus, internalize and withdraw the senses. Pratyahara practices reduce external experiences by controlling the external senses, termed *karmendriyas*, organs of action, and *jnanendriyas*, organs of knowledge; as a result, the mind starts to turn within. So here, *dheerata* means establishing mental patience by withdrawing the mind from the senses. Until this occurs, the mind is joined to the senses and is restless, and hence patience cannot be achieved.

Often when people go travelling, they cannot sit still at the railway station while waiting for the train, but keep on roaming from one end of the platform to the other. They have no patience because their concentration or awareness is scattered. Other people, however, reach the station and sit quietly, thinking to themselves, “Even if the train is five hours late, I still have to catch it.” They just keep sitting, for what is the use of wandering about? In such people the senses are not restless; patience, therefore, can be achieved by withdrawing the mind from the senses.

Pranayama

Praanaayaamaallaaghavam: through pranayama lightness is achieved and grossness is reduced. When practising pranayama, the objective remains to gain control over the prana, so how is physical grossness reduced? When pranayama is practised and pranic energy is awakened, heat is generated in the body. The internal heat of prana is clearly seen in the lives of accomplished practitioners. Yogis in the mountains, wearing a mere loin cloth in the snow, definitely feel the cold as it is the nature of the body, but they practise pranayama which generates internal heat so that the cold does not affect them. There are also certain pranayamas

which lower the body temperature, so that even in the blistering heat of the desert, one will not perspire because the body temperature is lowered.

So it is being explained here that when energy and heat are generated through the practices of pranayama, disorders of the body start burning up automatically. Even fat is burnt up and dissolved. Physical grossness is reduced through pranayama and the body becomes light.

Dhyana

Dhyaanaatpratyakshamaatmanah: through meditation, self-realization is achieved. Through meditation, experiences of the subtle mind are clarified. This is well known. As one internalizes, one goes deeper and deeper, and can feel the subtle experiences within. This is a state of self-realization. Self-realization here does not mean direct realization of God, but getting to know one's self. Meditation is a process of recognizing one's self. Getting to know one's self and understanding one's self is only possible through meditation.

Samadhi

Samaadhinaa nirliptam: through samadhi a state of non-involvement is achieved. One's entire life is involved with sensual pleasures. There is attachment to actions, principles, ideals and thinking processes, which is why the vision remains narrow and limited. However, when the state of samadhi is attained and there is understanding of all the dimensions and states of consciousness, the final state is *turiya*, inner awakening, in which one does not remain involved with karmas. One remains unattached to sensual pleasures and overcomes the lust for worldly pleasures. Through samadhi this state of non-involvement and thereafter liberation is achieved.

Introduction to Shatkarma

Through the shatkarmas, harmonization of ida and pingala, the two main flows of prana, is established, resulting in physical and mental purity and balance. The shatkarmas also balance *vata*, wind, *pitta*, bile, and *kapha*, mucus, the three disorders created in the body. According to ayurveda and hatha yoga, any imbalance in these three disorders gives rise to disease. The shatkarmas are also utilized before pranayama and other higher practices of yoga so that the body becomes free from disease and does not create any obstacles on the spiritual path.

These powerful practices should never be undertaken just by reading about them in a book or by learning from inexperienced people. According to the tradition, a person has the right to teach others only after being instructed by the guru. It is essential that these instructions are given personally, including the knowledge of when and how the practices are to be done, according to the needs of the individual.

Verse 12

धौतिर्वस्तिस्तथा नेतिः लौलिकी त्राटकं तथा ।
कपालभातिश्चैतानि षट्कर्माणि समाचरेत् ॥ 12 ॥

*Dhautirvastistathaa netih laulikee traatakam tathaa;
Kapaalabhaatishchaitaani shatkarmaani samaacharet.*

Performing the shatkarmas: dhauti, basti, neti, lauliki, trataka and kapalbhati, is essential.

In this verse, the six types of cleansing practices are listed: 1. dhauti, 2. basti, 3. neti, 4. lauliki (also called nauli), 5. trataka and 6. kapalbhati. The shatkarmas purify the body. Their purpose, however, is not only physical purification, but inner purification as well. When the body is purified, internal disorders are removed and good health is achieved. Without such purification the body will not be ready for the higher practices of yoga.

After purification a human being lives longer on this earth. In the Upanishads and Vedas it states in a number of places that human beings live for a hundred years, *jeevema sharadam shatam*. This is not only the thinking of the Vedas, Upanishads or ancient philosophies, it is the truth. If a human being remains healthy and free from disease, living for a hundred years or more is natural. Accurate genetic copying of the cells can continue for that length of time if the programming is not disrupted by impurities or imbalances.

Causes of ill health

The root cause of ill health is impurities in the body that create disorders. Impurity does not simply imply waste matter, but physical, mental, emotional and spiritual impurity.

Physical and dietary imbalances: Physical impurity is mainly related to diet, its qualities and defects. For example, meal times are not often based on what is best for the body.

Many people rise late, have breakfast at ten, lunch at two and dinner between eight and nine at night. Also, food contains many impure elements, including residues from fertilizers and pesticides used in agriculture. Such impurities cannot be completely removed from the diet because most people depend on purchasing food, but certainly some adjustment to meal times can be managed to be in accord with the natural routine of the body. The result will be an improvement in health.

The vedic tradition stresses that meals should be taken after sunrise and before sunset, but people today do not believe in this way of thinking or adhere to this advice, although the Jains still observe strict dietary disciplines. Why not eat before sunrise or after sunset? There is a scientific reason behind this theory, linked with the biorhythms of the body. The solar plexus is linked with the digestive system and is activated by the sun. This important fact should always be kept in mind. It explains why observing this simple rule is the first step in remaining free from disease.

The second rule for keeping the body disease-free, as emphasized in ayurveda, is that fifty percent of the stomach should be filled with nutritious food, twenty-five percent with water and the remaining twenty-five percent should be kept empty. Generally, however, people's eating habits are quite different to this model. When there is good food, they tend to eat more than they require, due to greed and the sense of taste. Diseases, such as high blood cholesterol, are often the result. Disorders of the blood or stomach are often caused by an uncontrolled diet because the quantities of vata, pitta and kapha are unbalanced.

The third rule that yoga recommends is that meals be taken twice or three times a day, no more. The stomach needs to be regulated in this way because whenever food enters the stomach, digestive juices are produced in the same quantity. The stomach does not distinguish between a biscuit and a full plate of food, it simply produces digestive juices. So if a biscuit is eaten every ten minutes, the stomach will

produce the same amount of digestive juices ten times, which may contribute to stomach ulcers or hernia, and possibly liver damage or kidney failure. If everyone ate a balanced diet at regular times, eighty percent of diseases and disorders would end.

Mental tension: The second cause of disorders in the body is related to the type of thinking. If the mind is unhappy or tense, worried or disturbed, the appetite may disappear and one will not feel like eating. When there is deep involvement in an external situation or a mental state, it has an effect on the body. When negative thoughts, worries, disturbances and mental tensions arise, they have detrimental effects on the body and disorders or diseases take root.

Emotional anxiety: The third cause of physical disorders is emotional. Medical science describes it beautifully. It has been shown that when a person is in a state of happiness or sorrow, a hormone called adrenalin is secreted by the adrenal glands. This secretion over-excites the body. It is also closely related to the senses. When one fights with someone, adrenalin is secreted, increasing the rate of respiration. The heartbeat also speeds up and the senses immediately become alert. The 'fight or flight' response occurs in both happiness and sorrow.

Internal turmoil: The fourth cause is spiritual. This may manifest as an unsteady mind, as mental or inner turmoil or in the expression of samskaras and karmas, all of which may have a negative effect on the body.

Modern civilization is deeply involved in materialism, but the shatkarmas are part of a complete yoga practice oriented towards the whole person, not just the physical body.

Shatkarma practices

Those practices which regulate the functioning of the internal organs and make them free from disease can now be explained.

1. **Dhauti kriya:** The first practice is *dhauti*, cleansing of the stomach and alimentary canal or digestive tract. There

are four types of dhauti: antar dhauti, danta dhauti, hrid dhauti and moola shodhana. Three methods are used: with water, with cloth or with air. These techniques help to remove many stomach ailments. Indigestion and other abdominal disorders such as constipation, irritable bowel syndrome and hyperacidity can be cured by practising dhauti.

2. **Basti kriya:** The second practice is *basti*, yogic enema. In basti, water is sucked up through the anus and kept in the large intestine for some time. The water does not enter the small intestine, but remains in the large intestine. After some time the water is expelled, just as in a regular enema. The only difference is that in an enema a tube is used. Basti is more natural and more appropriate. When an enema is given, excessive force may be applied, resulting in scratches inside the body with the potential for internal injury and bleeding. The waste matter is toxic, so when it comes into contact with a wound, infection can result. Therefore, yogis recommend basti instead of an enema. However, first the practice has to be perfected, and while learning the technique a rubber tube or catheter is required.

3. **Neti kriya:** The third practice is *neti*, nasal cleansing. Neti works like an ENT specialist, cleansing the nose, ears and throat. It is a simple practice. Sage Gheranda describes the variation in which a thread is passed through the nostrils. Alternatively, water is poured in one nostril and flows out the other. The benefits are experienced as soon as the practice is done, as it clears the nasal passages and sinuses. Neti is beneficial for people suffering from sinusitis, rhinitis, headache, migraine or constant frontal headache, weak eyesight, eye fatigue, watering of the eyes after reading, eye congestion, pain in the eyes, and minor ailments of the ears such as excessive wax and hardened wax, which may injure the eardrums during its removal. Neti can also relieve throat irritation.

4. **Lauliki kriya:** The fourth practice is *lauliki*, which is also called *nauli*. It is a powerful technique which massages

and strengthens all the abdominal organs. It should be practised by those suffering from indigestion, loss of appetite or intestinal worms. It is also useful for removing excess vata or wind.

5. **Trataka:** The fifth practice is *trataka*, steady gazing, which is useful for removing eye defects and balancing the nervous system. It can, for example, help to remove nervous tics or uncontrolled nervous activity such as one eye blinking very fast. Trataka can relieve eyestrain, short-sightedness, far-sightedness, myopia or other eye defects in a healthy body. Experience has also shown that with the practice of trataka alone, many people no longer need to wear spectacles.

6. **Kapalbhati:** The sixth practice is *kapalbhati*. This is a breathing technique that clears the head and can help to remove defects of the lungs. The trachea or windpipe becomes free from disease and the blood is purified, as a greater volume of oxygen is taken in and a greater volume of carbon dioxide is expelled. Kapalbhati is useful for correcting imbalances of the autonomic nervous system and mental disorders. It is also useful for a weakened memory. Research conducted in an American university found that memory retention in older people can be improved by practising pawanmuktasana part 1 and kapalbhati for six months.

Shatkarma practices

<i>DHAUTI</i>	Antar dhauti (internal)	Vatsara (air) Varisara (shankha- prakshalana) Vahnisara (agnisara kriya) Bahishkrita (rectal cleaning)
	Danta dhauti (head)	Dantamoola (teeth) Jihva (tongue) Karnarandhra (ears) Kapalrandhra (frontal sinuses)
	Hrid dhauti (cardiac)	Danda (stick) Vaman (kunjal & vyaghra kriya) Vastra (cloth)
	Moola shodhana (anal)	
<i>BASTI</i>	Jala (water) Sthala (dry)	
<i>NETI</i>	Jala (water) Sutra (thread)	
<i>LAULIKI</i> <i>(NAULI)</i>	Madhyama (middle) Vama (left) Dakshina (right) Bhramara (abdomen)	
<i>TRATAKA</i>	Bahiranga (external) Antaranga (internal)	
<i>KAPALBHATI</i>	Vatakrma (breathing) Vyutkrma (reversed) Sheetkrma (cooling)	

Dhauti

Verse 13

अन्तर्धौतिर्दन्तधौतिर्हृद्घौतिर्मूलशोधनम् ।
धौतिं चतुर्विधां कृत्वा घटं कुर्वन्ति निर्मलम् ॥13॥

*Antardhautirdantadhautirhridhdhautirmoolashodhanam;
Dhautim chaturvidhaam kritvaa ghatam kurvanti nirmalam.*

Antar dhauti, danta dhauti, hrid dhauti and moola shodhana are the four types of dhauti which keep the body clean and healthy.

Antar dhauti means internal cleansing. Air, water and cloth are the three means of cleansing. The literal meaning of *danta dhauti* is cleaning the teeth, but here it means cleansing the frontal region of the head, rather than the literal meaning. The third dhauti is *hrid dhauti*, cleansing of the heart region, which includes the oesophagus and lungs. The fourth is *moola shodhana*, cleansing the base or root portion of the body like the anus, rectum, large intestine, urinary tract, etc. What is the result of these four practices of dhauti? *Ghatam kurvanti nirmalam*, they make the body pure.

ANTAR DHAUTI (internal cleansing)

Verse 14

वातसारं वारिसारं वह्निसारं बहिष्कृतम् ।
घटस्य निर्मलार्थाय ह्यन्तर्धौतिश्चतुर्विधा ॥ 14॥

*Vaatasaram vaarisaaram vahnisaaram bahishkritam;
Ghatasya nirmalaarthaaya hyantardhautishchaturvidhaa.*

Antar dhauti also has four subdivisions: vatsara, varisara, vahnisara and bahishkrita; they are performed to make the body clean and pure.

The first of the four types of dhauti kriya, antar dhauti, includes four practices: 1. vatsara, 2. varisara, 3. vahnisara and 4. bahishkrita. These are cleansing practices for the internal organs.

Vatsara dhauti cleanses the stomach and intestines by using air. Just as accumulated dust and dirt can be removed by blowing air or using suction, similarly, in the practice of vatsara dhauti air is introduced into the stomach, expelling toxic or foul-smelling gases and wind, and stimulating the digestive system.

The second practice is *varisara dhauti*, known today as *shankhaprakshalana*, in which the entire digestive tract is cleaned with the help of water. Cleansing with water removes excess bile, digestive juices and mucus. The stomach is filled with water, which is expelled via the anus. Toxic materials in the small and large intestines are also dissolved and expelled.

The third practice is *vahnisara*, or *agnisara kriya*, cleansing the stomach and internal organs with the help of the fire or heat of *jatharagni*, the digestive fire. This removes disorders of the digestive system, enabling it to function smoothly. When the digestion is working well, the body assimilates the nutrition it needs, resulting in strength and energy.

The fourth practice is *bahishkrita dhauti*, which is similar to vatsara dhauti in that air is also used. *Bahir* means outside,

and *krit* means doing or taking out. In this practice both the large and small intestines are cleansed with the help of air and water.

So far Sage Gheranda has introduced the seven means of purifying the physical and subtle bodies, of which shatkarma is the first. He then introduces shatkarma by explaining the practices in a general way. Next, each practice is looked at in greater depth and detail. The usage and technique are explained in a pure form.

I. VATSARA ANTAR DHAUTI (cleaning the stomach with air)

Verse 15

काकचञ्चुवदास्येन पिबेद्वायुं शनैः शनैः ।
चालयेदुदरं पश्चाद्वर्त्तना रेचयेच्छनैः ॥ 15 ॥

*Kaakachanchuvadaasyena pibedvaayum shanaih shanaih;
Chaalayedudaram pashchaadvartmanaa rechayechchhanaih.*

Shaping the lips like a crow's beak, slowly, slowly suck in as much air as possible, circulate it inside the abdomen and then gradually expel it completely.

The technique is explained here, but it is important to know more than just the technique. For example, which asana should be adopted? For this practice one should sit in an asana like padmasana, sukhasana, siddhasana or siddha yoni asana. The hands should then be placed on the knees and the spine kept straight. This practice should not be performed while standing. When standing, the intestines are open and air can freely enter them, but when sitting in an asana, the physical position contracts the intestines, causing a type of blockage which keeps the air in the stomach. Therefore, this practice should be done seated in a meditative asana.

Technique

Sitting in a comfortable posture, open the mouth, shaping the lips like a crow's beak.

Exhale through the nose, then sip the air slowly through the mouth, making an effort to fill the abdomen.

This is known as *kaki mudra*. It is not difficult, but it requires practice.

Keep on filling the stomach with as much air as possible.

When the stomach is completely full, relax the body and rotate the air inside the abdomen for some time.

Thereafter, expel the air by *rechaka*, exhalation.

Once seated comfortably, the lips are pursed in the shape of a crow's beak. Air is then swallowed in the same way as drinking water. In pranayama, air is taken into the lungs, but in this practice air is not allowed into the lungs, it is taken straight into the stomach, as if it were water. When water is swallowed, the windpipe automatically closes so that water cannot enter. Gargling also closes off the windpipe, preventing water from entering it. How to close the windpipe at will needs to be learned first. There needs to be control over the muscles of the throat which control this closure of the windpipe.

Secondly, how to take the air into the stomach needs to be understood. When air is sucked into the stomach, it is kept inside for a minute or two only, not more. Normal respiration continues. No mention is made of breath retention. Respiration goes on while the air is kept inside the stomach. After one or two minutes the air is slowly released by belching. If the stomach is in an unhealthy state, the expelled air will be foul-smelling, but this is rare.

The speed with which the air enters should be regulated, and not too fast. The mouth should not be open too much as the amount of air sucked into the mouth is the quantity of air swallowed. Gradually more air is taken in and then more again. The speed should be similar to the normal speed of respiration, not like gulping water rapidly. Generally, with

the air retained in the abdomen, vahnisara (agnisara kriya) or lauliki (navli kriya) is performed, rotating the air in the abdomen. After rotation, the air is released.

This practice stimulates the digestive system and removes gas and wind. Normally, an experience of lightness is felt after belching. Vatsara dhauti is a very simple practice, which may be done knowingly or unknowingly. When eating, air is often swallowed with food and it enters the stomach. Sometimes it is expelled through the rectum, but mostly it comes out through the mouth in the form of belching. Vatsara dhauti is based on this natural practice. However, air is not accidentally swallowed as at the time of eating, but consciously directed into the stomach.

Vatsara dhauti can be performed at any time of the day except immediately after meals. It is most beneficial to practise it once or twice a day before meals, with a maximum of five times. It can be practised daily.

Verse 16

वातसारं परं गोप्यं देह निर्मलकारकम् ।
सर्व रोगक्षयकरं देहानलविवर्द्धकम् ॥ 16॥

*Vaatasaram param gopyam deha nirmalakaarakam;
Sarva rogakshayakaram dehaanalarvivarddhakam.*

Vatsara is a very secret technique for purifying the body. It destroys all diseases and activates the gastric fire, which helps to digest food.

Vaatasaram param gopyam means vatsara is a most secret practice. Why is it secret? There are several reasons. If one thinks about it, all yogic practices are treated as secret practices. First, no one has complete knowledge of the practical aspect of yoga. Second, the results of yogic practice are also very subtle. Third, the result of a practice can never be known by merely learning it from a book. For example, people often try to awaken kundalini by reading about it and

sometimes doing the practices as well, but when kundalini starts to stir without proper preparation, such unprepared people can go crazy.

Precautions

The rules for this practice are similar to those for other practices. Just as asanas are best done on an empty stomach, this rule is also followed in dhauti, but more strictly because if there is food in the stomach, it will be expelled during the practice. It should always be remembered that asana, pranayama, shatkarma and all the physical practices of yoga should be done on an empty stomach.

If the practice is performed incorrectly, without practical knowledge and guidance, there is the possibility of causing harm. It needs to be remembered that not everyone is able to do the higher practices of yoga because of their physical constitution, or reduced physical capacity, or simply due to ageing. An eighty-year-old should not be given heavy duty shatkarmas, but advised to do light practices like pawanmuktasana, nadi shodhana pranayama and yoga nidra. Not all yogic practices are suitable for everyone. The physical capacity, condition and aim of the individual must be considered.

Often when people experience pain in the chest, the cause is wind rather than a heart attack. When wind in the digestive system moves upwards, it can cause a feeling of pressure inside the chest and there may be a slight pain in the heart region. Many people become frightened, mistaking the sensation for a heart attack. That misunderstanding may create so much fear that the pain intensifies. In such a situation vatsara is very useful. However, vatsara kriya should not be performed by those who have suffered a heart attack in the past two or three years, and must also be avoided by those who have had heart surgery.

Benefits

Dehanirmalakaarakam, vatsara kriya makes the body clean internally. *Nirmala* means pure, sacred. A pure body results in good health. Many diseases are associated with digestive problems. Restoring balance to the digestive system benefits overall wellbeing.

Sarvarogakshayakaram dehaanalarivivardhakam, this practice destroys all diseases and increases the effectiveness of the digestive fire by enhancing the chemical reactions in the stomach. It expels unwanted gases from the stomach, regulates the gastric juices, mucus and acid production, and removes irritation and pain due to acidity in the stomach and oesophagus. If the digestive system is functioning well, digestive juices are produced in the right quantity, excretion of faeces becomes regular and many health problems such as constipation, diarrhoea, peptic ulcers and reflux (heartburn) are reduced.

2. VARISARA ANTAR DHAUTI: SHANKHAPRAKSHALANA (cleaning the stomach and intestines with water)

Verses 17–18

आकण्ठं पूरयेद्वारि वक्त्रेण च पिबेच्छनैः ।
चालयेदुदरैर्नैव चोदराद्रेचयेदधः ॥ 17॥
वारिसारं परं गोप्यं देहनिर्मलकारकम् ।
साधयेत्तत्प्रयत्नेन देवदेहं प्रपद्यते ॥ 18॥

*Aakantham poorayedvaari vaktrena cha pibechchhanaih;
Chaalayedudarenaiva chodaraadrechayedadhah. (17)*

*Vaarisaram param gopyam dehanirmalakaarakam;
Saadhayettatprayatnena devadeham prapadyate. (18)*

Drink water slowly through the mouth up to the throat. The abdomen is then moved and the water evacuated through the anus. The technique of varisara dhauti is

most secret. It purifies the body. A yogi who perfects this technique attains a divine body.

Vari means water, *sara* means element, and *dhauti* means washing. Varisara dhauti is also known as shankhaprakshalana. It is the second practice of antar dhauti. The first practice, vatsara dhauti, cleanses the stomach only by expelling unwanted gas, mucus and digestive juices, but the aim of varisara dhauti is the expulsion of faeces from the intestines. Toxic elements are expelled from the body and the entire system revitalized, as this practice cleanses the entire alimentary canal from the mouth to the anus. It is also a part of the ayurvedic technique of *kaya kalpa* because it rejuvenates the whole body.

It is important to understand the structure of the digestive system. The digestive tract consists of a long tube from the mouth to the anus called the alimentary canal, which includes the oesophagus, stomach and small and large intestines. The walls of the digestive tract are made of specialized muscles arranged in layers. When the intestinal muscles contract, a rippling movement results and peristalsis occurs. The contents of the digestive system are pushed forward through the digestive tract towards the anus. This rippling contraction resembles the movement of an earthworm.

The intestines are more than six metres long, and are coiled to fit into the abdominal cavity. The inner walls of the digestive system are lined with specialized tissue to allow digestion and absorption to occur. In order to increase the surface area available for absorption, the lining of the small intestine contains circular folds of tissue and the wall of the large intestine is puckered with bulges. However, this also means that particles of semi-digested food or faeces can lodge within the intricate folds of the intestinal lining and decay.

Most people never clean their intestines. It is well known that if one does not drink enough water, faeces builds up in the large intestine, becoming dry and hard and causing

constipation. When a bowel action finally occurs, the delicate lining of the intestine, bowel or anus may be scratched by the hard stool, which can be painful and even cause bleeding. Even drinking several litres of water daily, however, does not fully clean the stomach and intestines. The water is absorbed through the intestinal walls and flows through the bloodstream to the kidneys where it is excreted as urine. As the water does not pass through the intestines, decaying matter remains trapped in the crevices of the intestines and can cause disease. Shankhaprakshalana overcomes this problem and it is very simple to cure constipation with this technique.

Preparation

It is advisable to have only a light meal such as fruit or khichari the night before undertaking this practice.

On the day of varisara dhauti, avoid practising asanas in the morning and do not take food or beverages beforehand. Light, loose, comfortable clothing should be worn during the practice.

Prepare a bucket of clean, lukewarm water. Add about two teaspoons of salt per litre of water so that it tastes mildly salty. Let the salt dissolve. (If the salt is dirty, strain it through a clean cloth.)

Place of practice: The best place for varisara dhauti is a courtyard, veranda or garden in the open air. Make sure there is a toilet nearby.

Technique

Drink two glasses of lukewarm salty water as quickly as possible. If one sips the water slowly and rests in between, the practice will not be performed correctly.

Next, the following five asanas are performed dynamically eight times each, in this sequence: tadasana, tiryak tadasana, kati chakrasana, tiryak bhujangasana and udarakarshanasana. This is one round. Do not rest between rounds.

Drink two more glasses of the prepared warm salty water and again perform the five asanas dynamically eight times each. Repeat this process a third time, then go to the toilet. Do not strain. If there is no bowel movement after a few minutes, perform a fourth round. Then return to the toilet. Keep going at a brisk pace, otherwise the pressure inside the abdomen will lessen as the water starts to be absorbed from the digestive system into the bloodstream.

Ordinary faeces are excreted first and then liquid waste. Next, yellow coloured water comes out, which expels pitta. Hidden particles of old and dried waste that had become stuck to the walls of the intestines over a period of years are also freed. Continue drinking water and performing the asanas until clear water is expelled, or until after drinking 16 to 20 glasses of water, almost clear water comes out. This indicates that all the mucus and debris has been removed from the alimentary canal. When clear water starts coming, the practice should be stopped.

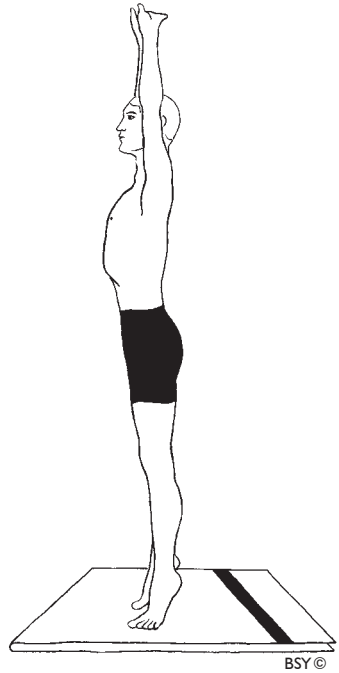
On average, between 16 and 20 glasses of salty water are required to complete the practice, but it varies from person to person. One should drink a maximum of 20 glasses of water.

Asanas

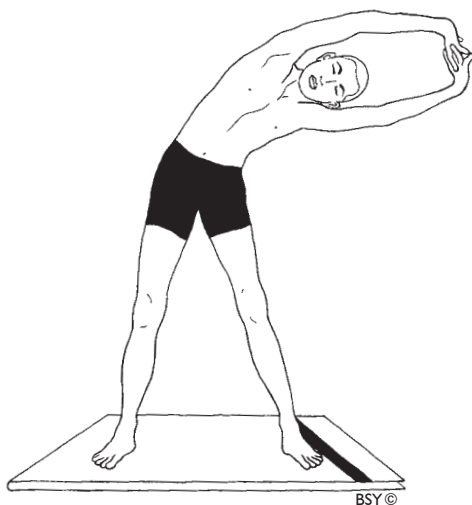
These five asanas activate intestinal peristalsis and enhance the cleansing process. When performed in the correct sequence, they work together to systematically open the various intestinal valves between the stomach and the bowels, progressively opening the pyloric valve (at the outlet of the stomach), the ileocecal valve (at the exit of the small intestine) and finally the sphincter which forms the anus, thus encouraging the salt water to flow from the beginning of the intestines to the rectum.

I. Tadasana (palm tree pose)

Stand with the feet together or about 10 cm apart, arms by the sides. Steady the body and distribute the weight equally on both feet. Inhaling, raise the arms over the head, interlock the fingers and turn the palms upward. Place the hands on top of the head. Focus the eyes on a fixed point to help maintain balance. Stretch the arms, shoulders and chest upwards. Raise the heels, coming up onto the toes. Stretch the whole body, without losing balance or moving the feet. Hold the position for a few seconds. At first it may be difficult to maintain balance, but with practice it becomes easier. Exhaling, lower the heels and bring the hands to the top of the head. This is one round.



Benefits: Tadasana acts mainly on the stomach and stretches the colon. The oesophagus is held straight, and the stomach and abdomen are alternately compressed and expanded as the body is stretched and released. During inhalation the diaphragm contracts and moves downwards, exerting pressure on the abdominal organs. During exhalation, the diaphragm relaxes and the pressure on the abdominal wall relaxes. The muscular orifice, or pyloric valve, between the stomach and the duodenum opens, allowing water to pass through and into the small intestine.



2. Tiryak tadasana (swaying palm tree pose)

Stand with the feet more than a shoulder width apart. As in tadasana, inhale and raise both the arms over the head. Fix the gaze on a point directly in front. Keeping the hands stretched over the head, exhale and bend the body to the right side from the waist without straining. Do not bend forward or backward or twist the trunk. Hold the position for a few seconds, then inhaling, slowly return to the centre and repeat on the left side. This is one round.

Benefits: Tiryak tadasana acts on the small intestine and colon. There is expansion on one side of the body and compression on the other. Pressure is exerted first on the intestines on the right side of the abdomen and then on those on the left side. Note that the small intestine starts on the right side of the abdomen. The folded intestines are massaged and water is pushed through them, flushing out any decaying particles.

3. Kati chakrasana (waist rotating pose)

Stand with the feet more than a shoulder width apart. Inhaling, raise the arms, spreading them sideways at

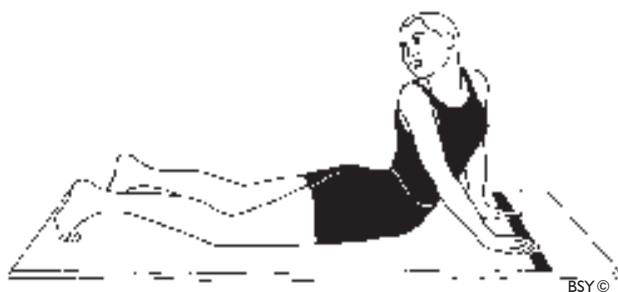
shoulder level. Exhaling, twist the body to the right, turning from the waist, while keeping the knees relaxed and the feet still. Bring the left hand to the right shoulder and wrap the right arm around the back so that the right hand rests on the left side of the waist.

Relax the arms and back as much as possible throughout the practice.

Look over the right shoulder as far as is comfortable. Hold for a few seconds, accentuate the twist, gently stretching the abdomen. Inhaling, return to the starting position.

Repeat on the other side. This is one round. Exhale while releasing the pose.

Benefits: The twisting action of this asana massages the abdominal organs and small intestine, so that water is pushed through the intestines. The posture should be performed smoothly without undue physical strain.

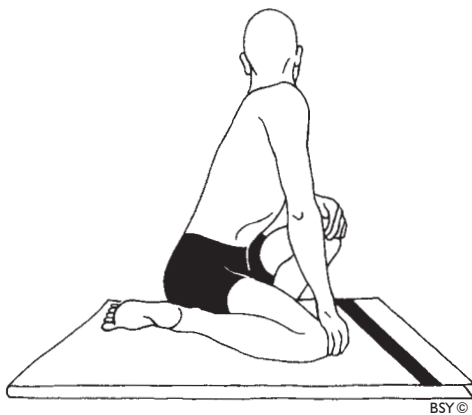


4. Tiryak bhujangasana (twisting cobra pose)

Lie flat on the stomach with the feet separated about half a metre. Place the palms of the hands flat on the

floor, below and slightly to the side of the shoulders. Inhaling, slowly raise the head, neck and shoulders. Straightening the elbows a little, raise the trunk as high as is comfortable, keeping the navel close to the floor. Keep the back relaxed. The head should be facing forward. Holding the breath in, twist the head and upper portion of the trunk slightly, and look over the left shoulder. Gaze at the heel of the right foot. Face forward again and repeat the twist on the other side without lowering the trunk. Return to the centre and exhaling, lower the body to the floor. This is one round.

Benefits: This asana squeezes and massages the stomach and intestines, enabling the ileocecal valve, the shutter between the small and large intestines, to open so that water can enter the large intestine.



5. Udarakarshanasana (abdominal stretch pose)

Squat with the feet about half a metre apart and with the hands on the knees. Bring the left knee to the floor near the right foot. Exhaling, push the right knee towards the left with the right hand, simultaneously twisting the trunk from the waist to the right. The lower abdomen is squeezed by the combined pressure from the thighs. Look over the right shoulder. Inhale and return to the

starting position. Repeat on the other side of the body to complete one round.

Benefits: Udarakarshanasana squeezes and massages the caecum, sigmoid colon and rectum, and also stimulates the urge to defecate. The lower abdomen and digestive organs are alternately stretched and compressed, encouraging water to move through the large intestine, thereby expelling waste. Note that the twist is first to the right to compress the ascending colon, then to the left to compress the descending colon, following the direction of intestinal peristalsis.

Practice note: In these practices an effort is made to move the water through the oesophagus, stomach and intestines under pressure, and then expel it. The gastrointestinal tract is shaped like a conch, *shankha*. Just as a conch is cleaned by rotating water inside it, this practice has been named shankhaprakshalana because the stomach and intestines are cleansed by filling them with water, moving the water through and then expelling it.

The water drunk during this practice should be luke-warm, not hot or cold. Cold water causes constriction of the blood vessels that supply the digestive tract. Hot water is also contraindicated because it would burn the lining of the gut.

There is also an important reason for adding salt. The body cannot absorb salt water easily. When plain water is drunk, it is absorbed through the intestines into the body and excess is eliminated in urine. If salty water is drunk, much of it is not absorbed and comes out via the anus.

It should be remembered that during shankhaprakshalana, water should not be drunk in excess so that one feels like vomiting. In this verse it is written, *Aakantham poorayedvaari*, meaning water is to be drunk right up to throat level, but this relates to kunjala kriya, which is the next step of the practice.

Related practices: After completing the intestinal wash it is essential to perform kunjal kriya and jala neti. Only then is the technique of shankhaprakshalana complete.

Kunjal kriya (*vaman dhauti*): In this practice salted luke-warm water is quickly drunk right up to throat level. When the water comes up to throat level, it is immediately vomited out. All the undigested food contents of the stomach are thrown out by kunjal kriya. This is what drinking water up to throat level means. Through this practice the upper organs of the digestive system are cleaned.

Jala neti: Though *jala neti*, nasal cleansing with salt water, is not mentioned in the verse, it should be performed after kunjal to complete the practice. Similarly, following jala neti, it is important to bend forward and practise kapalbhati pranayama to expel all the water from the nostrils. These practices also remove tension from the body and brain.

Rest: On completing the practices, it is essential to rest completely in shavasana for 45 minutes. This allows the whole digestive system to revitalize itself following the expulsion of impurities. During this time do not drink water or bathe, and do not walk around. Avoid sleeping as a headache or cold may result. Sometimes people think they are developing a fever as the body temperature may rise after drinking the lukewarm water and sweating may occur, but this practice does not cause fever. Nevertheless, it is important to keep the body warm and comfortable during the rest period.

Special meal: After resting in shavasana for 45 minutes, the specially prepared meal of khichari must be eaten. It is important to have light meals after shankhaprakshalana so that there is no extra load on the digestive system. Khichari is very light and easy to digest. It is made with good quality white rice and mung dal to which *ghee*, clarified butter, is liberally added. These three components help to restore correct digestive function. The ghee should be warmed and melted, so that

particles are not floating on the surface. A little *haldi*, turmeric, can also be added to khichari, but no salt. The final preparation is semi-liquid.

The specially prepared khichari is eaten immediately on completion of the 45-minute rest period, and again for the late afternoon or evening meal, about six hours after the first special meal. The stomach must be filled to capacity at both meals even if there is no feeling of hunger. This relines the intestines and provides bulk, assisting the intestines to resume peristalsis. The stomach is completely empty after the practice and by eating a large quantity of khichari with ghee the lining of the gut, which was removed by the salty lukewarm water, is replaced with a fatty film. The rice creates mucus, which also protects the inner lining of the alimentary canal. The lentils provide an easily digestible source of protein. Water should not be drunk, but if it is essential, then only have one or two sips of warm water.

Further rest: After eating, further rest is essential, but it is important not to sleep for at least three hours after the initial meal in order to obtain the full benefits of the practice. Sleeping during this period may lead to physical lethargy and headache. Rest completely for the remainder of the day. Avoid physical or mental work, and rest and eat khichari on the following day as well.

Climate: The weather plays a significant role in the practice of shankhaprakshalana. It must not be performed during extremely cold or extremely hot weather, nor during cloudy, windy or rainy weather. The best time to practise is at the change of the seasons.

Frequency: Shankhaprakshalana can be performed at intervals of six months, i.e. once or twice a year, when there is a change of seasons; for example, when winter is changing into summer. *Kapha* (mucus) accumulates in the body during winter and starts dissolving and being evacuated when winter is over. This practice can be undertaken when coughing or kapha develops in the

chest after winter. According to the seasons in India, it is best to perform shankhaprakshalana in spring, March, and in September, after the rainy season, when temperatures are moderate prior to the onset of colder weather. In each country one must consider the most suitable time to perform this practice. It should not be performed more than twice a year.

Duration: Even though the actual practice is completed in two to three hours, the complete varisara dhauti takes two days. One should rest for the whole day and the next day. If this is not possible, the practice should not be undertaken. Note there are extensive dietary restrictions for a week and it takes an entire month to gradually return to a full vegetarian diet.

Precautions: Varisara is a secret practice because the technique is very lengthy and not everyone knows it. It should not be undertaken unless learned directly from a competent teacher. If performed incorrectly, there is the possibility of harmful side-effects instead of benefits. It must be done on an empty stomach because then the expulsion of water is very easy. If the stomach is full and the digestive process has started, there is every possibility of harm being caused.

Do not drink water or other liquids until at least two hours after the first special meal, even if very thirsty. Cold liquid will chill the digestive system. Drinking or eating before the prescribed period will dilute and wash away the new protective layer being formed in the digestive tract. Do not take a bath or shower for at least three hours after the practice. It is imperative for the body temperature to remain normal. Bathing immediately after shankhaprakshalana, might cause one to catch a cold. Do not use fans or air-conditioning, and if the room becomes cool, the body should be covered with a blanket to maintain the inner body temperature. Sitting in the hot sun, near a fire, or doing physical exercise should be avoided.

Rest periods should be maintained very carefully. Mental tension and stressful situations should also be avoided.

Food restrictions: The following rules are to be strictly followed. Those who are unable to follow these food restrictions should not practise shankhaprakshalana.

- For seven days do not eat spicy, acidic, rich or chemically processed foods. Avoid milk and milk products, sweets, tea, coffee, salads and fruits, especially acidic fruits such as lemons. Cigarettes, tobacco, paan, khaini, zarda and other intoxicants such as betel nut are prohibited. Do not take oil, condiments, chilli, pickle, papad or chutney with food.
- Take simple, sattvic well-cooked food like chapati, khichari, rice and lentils, and bland root vegetables or grains. The lighter the diet, the better. The efficacy of the digestive system has to be increased gradually by initially taking food which is light, pure and simple. Avoiding foods which are not easily digestible is essential, otherwise the healthy, fresh lining growing in the gut will be destroyed.
- Shankhaprakshalana is essential for non-vegetarians. Meat takes longer to digest and so the digestive fire needs to be really effective. Regular meat-eating weakens the digestive power and shankhaprakshalana becomes essential to increase the digestive capacity. Eating meat of any kind is prohibited for forty days after the practice.
- After shankhaprakshalana the stomach is vulnerable and sensitive like that of a new born baby and extra care should be taken to protect it. Strong allopathic medicines should be avoided for forty days. Alcohol and tobacco products are also prohibited. Not following these rules is as good as playing with one's own life.

The aim of shankhaprakshalana is to expel waste from the body and clean the whole digestive tract. These dietary restrictions ensure that the maximum benefits are gained from the practice.

Contra-indications: People with heart or kidney problems, high blood pressure, dizziness, epilepsy, peptic ulcers, hernia or bleeding piles should not practise shankhaprakshalana. Practitioners should be at least fifteen years old, and the body should be healthy. There is no upper age limit but physical fitness is imperative. This practice should be avoided during pregnancy.

Benefits: It makes the body clean and pure. *Saadhayaet tat prayatnena*, this practice can be perfected by practising with effort, and it is the best practice for purification of wastes and disorders of the digestive system. *Devadeham* means that one achieves a divine, lustrous, brilliant and light body like that of a god. Through this practice the body can be kept free from all types of diseases.

3. VAHNISARA ANTAR DHAUTI: AGNISARA KRIYA (activating the digestive fire)

Verses 19–20

नाभिग्रन्थिं मेरुपृष्ठे शतवारं च कारयेत् ।
अग्निसारमियं धौतिर्योगिनां योगसिद्धिदा ॥ 19॥
उदरामयजं त्वक्त्वा जठराग्निं विवर्द्धयेत् ।
एषा धौतिः परा गोप्या देवानामपि दुर्लभा ।
केवलं धौतिमात्रेण देवदेहं भवेद्ध्रुवम् ॥ 20॥

*Naabhigranthim meruprishthe shatavaaram cha kaarayet;
Agnisaaramiyam dhautiryoginaam yogasiddhidada. (19)*

*Udaraamayajam tvaktvaa jatharaagnim vivarddhayet;
Eshaa dhautih paraa gopyaa devaanaamapi durlabhaa;
Kevalam dhautimaatrena devadeham bhaveddhruvam. (20)*

Retaining prana vayu, pull the navel against the spinal column one hundred times. This enables agnisara dhauti to be performed. Diseases of the abdomen are removed and the digestive fire is stimulated. This cleansing

practice is most secret and is unknown even to the divine beings. By merely doing this practice the body becomes healthy and beautiful, there is no doubt about that.

Agnisara kriya or vahnisara dhauti is the third practice in the sequence of antar dhauti, and a very important one. It provides perfection to yogis and devotees who practise it. *Vahni* and *agni* mean fire, and *sara* means tattwa or element. *Dhauti* means to wash, which means this practice expels impurities from the body.

Agnisara kriya or vahnisara dhauti activates the digestive fire and increases the digestive power. The preceding practices utilize air and water to make the body free from disease. In this practice expansion and contraction of the abdomen take place, massaging all the abdominal organs and enhancing their digestive capacity.

In this verse the technique is briefly explained. *Naabhi-granthim meruprishthe shatavaaram cha kaarayet* means to contract the navel region towards the spinal cord one hundred times. This does not mean that every practitioner has to perform this practice one hundred times. It should be done as many times as is suitable for the individual.

Agnisara kriya can be performed sitting or standing.

Technique I

Sit in vajrasana, bhadrasana or in a meditative asana such as padmasana, siddhasana or siddha yoni asana. Do not practise in sukhasana because it is essential for the knees to touch the ground.

Keep the spine straight. Place the hands on the knees. Relax the whole body, especially the stomach.

The classical practice is performed while practising external kumbhaka and jalandhara bandha.

Often when breathing out through the nose, air remains in the lungs. When one exhales through the mouth and contracts the abdomen, however, the diaphragm in between the abdomen and the lungs moves up and

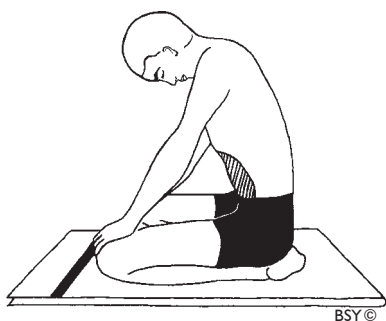


Figure 1

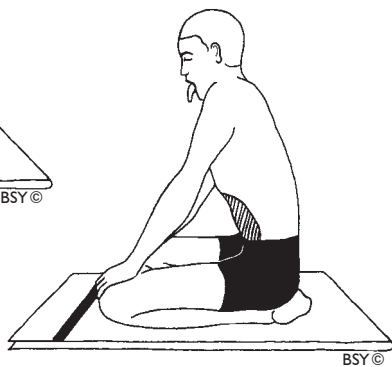


Figure 2

expels the air as fully as possible. The diaphragm should be used to expel the air and thereafter the breath should be retained outside, and no more air taken in. A small amount of air, called the residual volume, always remains, otherwise the lungs would collapse. Even so, it should feel as if all the air is exhaled.

After exhaling, perform jalandhara bandha. While retaining the breath outside, the abdomen is rapidly expanded and contracted for as long as possible without strain. (Figure 1)

Release jalandhara bandha. Take a slow, deep breath in. This is one round. Relax until the breath returns to normal before commencing the next round.

At first, 3 rounds of 10 abdominal contractions and expansions is sufficient. With regular practice, up to 50 abdominal movements may be practised.

In swana pranayama, the preparatory practice (Figure 2), straighten the arms and lean forward slightly, keeping the head erect. The eyes can be open or closed. Breathe in deeply. Then rounding the lips, breathe out completely through the mouth. Exhalation is through the mouth, not the nose. Exhale fully so that the lungs

and abdomen feel completely empty. Open the mouth wide and extend the tongue outside.

Begin panting like a dog, exhaling each time the navel is pulled in and inhaling each time the navel is pushed out. Be careful not to strain. The abdomen can be expanded and contracted 10–20 times. Then relax the abdominal muscles and breathe in deeply and slowly. Normal breathing is then practised for a minute or up to a count of 10 to 12 breaths. This is one round. The practice can then be repeated for a total of 3 rounds.

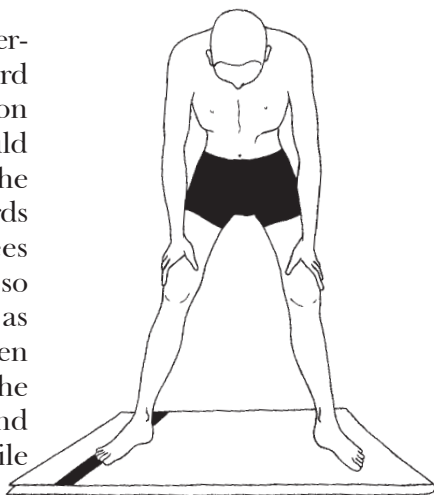
The idea is to pull the navel in so that it comes towards the spine and the abdomen is expanded and contracted rapidly. Then the shoulders and the whole body are relaxed.

Since the purpose of this practice is to massage the internal organs of the abdomen, the abdomen should be expanded and contracted as much as is comfortable without applying undue force.

When performed in padmasana, a special feature of the practice is that breath retention is ensured while expanding and contracting the abdomen.

Technique 2

Stand with the feet shoulder-width apart. Lean forward and place both palms on the knees. The arms should remain straight. Bend the knees slightly. Look towards the abdomen. The knees are braced by the hands so that the spine remains as straight as possible. Open the mouth and extend the tongue. Then contract and expand the abdomen while breathing in and out.



BSY ©

Frequency: Agnisara kriya should be practised on an empty stomach, preferably in the early morning before eating. A healthy person can repeat this practice a minimum of three times and a maximum of five times. Rest for a few moments after each round.

Precautions: To perfect this practice it is imperative to receive instructions from a guru; otherwise harm may result. Many contraindicated diseases have a good chance of being cured if the practice is conducted by a knowledgeable person, but it is essential to perform the practice under guidance.

Contra-indications: Agnisara kriya stimulates the nervous system, which places a lot of pressure on the cardiovascular system, abdominal walls and respiratory system. For this reason it should not be performed by anyone suffering from heart disease, high blood pressure, cancer or abdominal ulcers, hernia, asthma or severe respiratory disease. During pregnancy it is contraindicated, but after delivery it is said to be very useful. People with an overactive thyroid gland or chronic diarrhoea should not do this practice.

A healthy body is essential to do the shatkarma practices and achieve perfection. The shatkarmas should be undertaken only after ascertaining the capacity of the body.

Benefits: Physical – Agnisara kriya massages and tones all the abdominal organs. It promotes the correct secretion of digestive juices and allows optimum assimilation of nutrients from food. Stomach worms can also be destroyed. It prevents and removes disorders of the digestive system such as constipation, indigestion, hyperacidity, hypoacidity, irritable bowel syndrome, pitta imbalance and flatulence. This practice balances the abdominal organs.

Mental – Agnisara kriya is ideal for people with mental disturbances which cause a high degree of introversion. It activates the nervous system, so performing this practice moderately will remove depression for three or four hours.

Much emphasis is laid on the cleanliness of the internal organs in all the shatkarma practices, especially those of dhauti. According to yoga, seventy-five percent of diseases in the human body are caused by disorders in the digestive system, so in the shatkarma practices of dhauti emphasis has been laid on correcting the digestive system.

There are other causes of ill health such as environmental pollution and bacterial infection, but most health complaints are compounded by problems in the digestive system. If the abdominal organs become weak, food cannot be digested efficiently and constipation, diarrhoea, or liver upsets often occur. Agnisara kriya, being a powerful practice, activates the digestive system, thus both removing and preventing disease. Most of the remaining twenty-five percent of diseases occur due to mental worries and tensions.

In yoga there are different ideas regarding diet and digestion for yoga practitioners and householders. A practitioner who perfects yoga increases the digestive capacity to such an extent that virtually anything can be digested. For householders, a sattwic, regulated and simple diet is recommended because it is difficult to fully control the lifestyle. The aim of hatha yoga is to make the body so strong that it remains totally unaffected by any type of lifestyle, but for a householder this is not a realistic aim.

Pranic benefits

Agnisara kriya or vahnisara dhauti has a very important place in the area of prana and kundalini yoga because it awakens manipura chakra. Mooladhara and swadhisthana are the two chakras where kundalini shakti can be awakened, but may again fall asleep. Once kundalini shakti reaches manipura, however, it never again becomes inactive. This is the belief of kundalini yoga. It is also said that the pranas are only awakened in the body after awakening manipura chakra.

Externally no changes may be noticed in a practitioner's life when efforts are made to awaken mooladhara and swadhisthana chakras, but some very difficult mental and

emotional situations will have to be faced: excitement, worry, attachment, sorrow, etc. Here the scriptural principles of yoga are being discussed, not the scientific explanation for the awakening of kundalini. With the practice of agnisara kriya the nerves and glands of the navel region are stimulated. When this activation occurs in the solar plexus at manipura chakra, it directly affects the brain and pranic activity is experienced in the body. Laxity, laziness and distress are no more.

Agnisara kriya is said to be such a secret practice that even the gods do not know it. One might wonder what is so secret about moving the abdomen backward and forward. Once it is practised, however, one will realize how much control is needed to do it correctly. A person who does not possess control over the body cannot do this practice. By practising this dhauti alone, one attains a divine body.

4. BAHISHKRITA ANTAR DHAUTI (washing the rectum)

Breath and prana

It is important to bear in mind a few points on the significance of the breath and pranayama when discussing this practice. The breath has a very close relationship with the body. Whether doing asana, pranayama, dhauti or any hatha yoga practice, it is essential to have control over the breath, because according to yoga the breath is a mirror of the mental and emotional state. If the mind and emotions are restless or scattered, it can be observed in the breath. If a person is lying down and has many thoughts going through the mind and cannot stop those thoughts, the breathing will be rapid, short and unsteady. The breathing process will be mainly in the upper portion of the lungs and unconsciously the person will be longing for a deep calming breath. Alternatively, if the breathing pattern of a person who is calm, not distressed or restless, is observed, the breath will be found to be calm.

According to yoga there is also a relationship between the breath and the pranic body. Many people believe that if the breath is retained for a longer period, they might even die, but this is an incorrect concept. If the breath is withheld forcibly without practice, the face will turn black, brown, blue, and finally one does need to breathe, or indeed, death would result. It is quite possible, however, for a siddha yogi to function without the breath for up to half an hour and still be alive. Yogis have achieved this capacity, and it has been scientifically documented in the case of Swami Nadabrahmananda. The general public sees this as a *siddhi*, an accomplishment, but in the tradition, restraining the breath is not thought of as a *siddhi*, but as the capacity of the body. It is also possible to hold air inside the body for up to forty minutes, one hour or longer. The body can do a lot, but it is essential to understand the body and to recognize its capacity.

Prana can exist without breath. The breath has a relationship with *prana shakti*, the life force or energy, but prana is different from the breath. The difference is that prana shakti is present in the physical body in the form of heat, energy and brilliance. The inner heat, or body temperature, is an activity of prana shakti. If one does not breathe in for two minutes, it will make no difference, but if prana does not exist inside the body even for a second, one will die instantly. In its subtle state, prana shakti exists in the form of activity. That is why there is an experience of restlessness, excitement or activity in emotion, in the expression of love, attachment, attraction, anger, desire, lust and craving.

Hatha yoga

In one sense, prana shakti is even behind the thoughts, but then its form is changed and it is called *chitta shakti*. Prana shakti is physical and extroverted, whereas chitta shakti is internal, mental, emotional and intellectual. Prana shakti is also called *surya shakti*, solar energy, whereas chitta shakti

is also known as *chandra shakti*, lunar energy. *Ha* or *Ham* is the mantra for *surya shakti*; *Tha* or *Tham* is the mantra for *chandra shakti*. The word *hatha* (*ha-tha*) in *hatha yoga* is derived from the combination of these two mantras.

Hatha yoga here does not imply that compulsion or force has to be used with the body, but rather that an effort should be made to awaken and balance the forces of *chitta shakti* and *prana shakti* in the body. That is why the breathing process has been emphasized in *hatha yoga*. External practices are performed with the body, but in order to vibrate and awaken the inner *shakti* it is important to have control over the breath. This is an internal process.

Verse 21

काकीमुद्रां शोधयित्वा पूरयेदुदरं मरुत् ।
धारयेदर्धयामं तु चालयेदधोवर्त्मना ।
एषा धौतिः परा गोप्या न प्रकाश्या कदाचन ॥ 21 ॥

*Kaakeemudraam shodhayitvaa poorayedudaram marut;
Dhaarayedardhayaamam tu chaalayedadhovartmanaa;
Eshaa dhautih paraa gopyaa na prakaashyaa kadaachana.*

Purse the lips like the beak of a crow, take in air through the mouth, filling the abdomen. Retain the air for one and a half hours in the abdomen, then circulate it and expel it through the rectum. It is top secret and is called *bahishkrita dhauti*.

This is the fourth practice in the sequence of *antar dhauti* in *Gheranda Samhita*. If the technique of *bahishkrita dhauti* is understood, it will be realized that it cannot be practised until *pranayama* has been perfected. The whole practice can be divided into two techniques. The first technique is similar to *vatsara dhauti*, but requires greater expertise in *pranayama*.

Technique I

Kaakeemudraam shodhayitvaa poorayedudaram marut, adopt a facial mudra similar to kaki mudra and inhale so that air fills the abdomen.

In the practice of kaki mudra the lips are pursed and air is drawn in through the mouth in a similar way to drinking water. The air is then retained in the abdomen.

In the description of vatsara dhauti it was explained that normal breathing should be practised while retaining the air in the abdomen for a short while before releasing it by belching. In this practice there is a difference which is explained in the second line of the verse, *dhaarayedar dhayaamam tu chaalayedadhovartmanaa*, the air is to be retained in the stomach for half a yama.

Dhaarayedar dhayaamam means hold it for half a yama. In yogic literature the twenty-four hours are divided into yamas. One yama is equal to three hours. Half a yama is one and a half hours. Many texts have commented that this means breathing is not allowed for one and a half hours, but it is not possible to retain the breath for so long. Rather it means that the air should be retained in the stomach and alimentary canal for that length of time. Therefore, it is imperative that these verses are understood in the right perspective.

The air retained inside the stomach does not come up due to the sphincter between the oesophagus and the stomach. *Chaalayedadhovartmanaa* implies the air is to be moved around inside by churning the abdomen and then this air is to be expelled through the anus.

In order to perfect this practice, it is necessary to master pranayama. The process is explained here in very few words. Respiration should actually be kept to a bare minimum once the air has been taken in and retained in the stomach. The slower the respiration, the better. Normally, a person breathes in and out eleven to fifteen times a minute. However, for this practice the practitioner should be able

to take just one respiration per minute. Inhalation and exhalation should take thirty seconds each. This control over respiration is not possible without the preliminary practices of pranayama. When pranayama is practised, it takes only a little effort to hold this length of inhalation and exhalation. When one goes beyond this, breathlessness is experienced and it is necessary to take a deep breath in. Such an imbalance should not occur during this practice. Rather, the body should be in a state of complete relaxation, without any physical, muscular or respiratory excitement.

When air is retained in the abdomen for one and a half hours, it is imperative that the practitioner has full control over the stomach, oesophagus and intestines; otherwise the air will leak out of the body through the anus or in the form of belching.

While the air is retained, it is important to perform four of the asanas used in shankhaprakshalana. Tadasana, tiryak tadasana, kati chakrasana and tiryak bhujangasana will push the air down the intestines just as water is pushed down in shankhaprakshalana. After performing the asanas, it is important to go to the toilet, because the air pressure which builds up inside the body is released very quickly and waste products are expelled. In this way, through the medium of air, the intestines are cleaned and diseases of the digestive tract can be removed.

A normal person cannot practise bahishkrita dhauti. In reality, it is true to call it a secret practice. *Eshaa dhautih paraa gopyaa*, this dhauti is a very secret practice, *na prakaashyaa kadaachana*, which should never be taught to the general public. This statement is true. Even accomplished hatha yogis may experience great difficulty doing this practice.

Verses 22–24

नाभिमग्नजले स्थित्वा शक्तिनाडीं विसर्जयेत् ।
कराभ्यां क्षालयेन्नाडीं यावन्मलविसर्जनम् ॥ 22 ॥
तावत्प्रक्षाल्य नाडीं च उदरे वेशयेत्पुनः ।
इदं प्रक्षालनं गोप्यं देवानामपि दुर्लभम् ।
केवलं धौतिमात्रेण देवदेहो भवेद् ध्रुवम् ॥ 23 ॥
यामार्धं धारणाशक्तिं यावन्न धारयेन्नरः ।
बहिष्कृतं महद्भौतिस्तावच्चैव न जायते ॥ 24 ॥

*Naabhimagnajale sthitvaa shaktinaadeem visarjayet;
Karaabhyaam kshaalayennadeem yaavannmalavisarjanam. (22)*

*Taavatprakshaalya naadeem cha udare veshayetpunah;
Idam prakshaalanam gopyam devaanaamapi durlabham;
Kevalam dhautimaatreṇa devadeho bhaved dhruvam. (23)*

*Yaamaardha dhaaranaashakteem yaavanna dhaarayennarah;
Bahishkritam mahaddhautistaavachchaiva na jaayate. (24)*

Standing in water up to the navel, push out the rectum (shakti nadi) and wash it, removing the waste products. When the nadi is clean, draw it in again. This cleansing practice of dhauti is very secret. It is not even accessible to the gods. Just by practising this dhauti, one attains a body like that of a divine being. It is not possible to practise bahishkrita mahadhauti until the ability to retain air in the abdomen for up to one and a half hours has been developed.

This last practice of antar dhauti taught by Sage Gheranda is also called *mahadhauti*, the great dhauti, or *prakshalana dhauti*, washing the rectum, but it is extremely difficult to practise. Before practising this dhauti it is important to understand the subtle anatomy of the body. In general physiology there is knowledge of the nerves of the nervous system, whereas yogic physiology deals also with the more subtle nadis or flows of energy in the body.

Bahishkrita dhauti is a difficult practice, but because it is described in yoga texts, it is essential to discuss it. It needs to be clear that even if a practice is difficult, it always has an aim. In this case, part of that aim is to influence particular nadis and chakras.

Subtle energy body

According to yogic physiology, there are 72,000 nadis inside the body, through which a subtle force or prana shakti flows. These nadis not only control the flow of blood and the carriage of sensations between the body and brain, but also the flow of power or energy in the body. Out of these there are ten main ones: ida, pingala, sushumna, brahma, koorma, shakti, saraswati, brahmaputra, kaveri and lakshmi. Out of these ten, three are more significant: ida, pingala and sushumna.

In the practices of hatha yoga the major effort is to influence these ten nadis, but others are also significantly influenced. For instance, it is mentioned that by doing vajrasana, the vajra nadi is pressed and a sensation takes place inside it. Emphasis is laid on the ten major nadis in the shatkarma practices. After completing the shatkarma practices, and making an effort to learn about the practices of kundalini yoga or kriya yoga, it is found that five of these nadis are of major importance: ida, pingala, sushumna, brahma and koorma nadis.

According to modern science, many sensory and motor nerves originate from or terminate at the extremities of the body: for example the fingers, head, feet, sexual and urinary outlets and the anus. These areas are very sensitive. For example, if two or three needles are inserted into a person's thigh without the person seeing, the number of needles may not be detected, even if they are one or two centimetres apart. But if someone pricks an extremity with pins that are even one millimetre apart, the person will immediately be able to determine the number of pins due to the extra sensitivity there. This sensitivity is caused by the large number of sensory nerves and nadis there.

According to yogic anatomy, the chief nadis originate from mooladhara chakra. In yoga there are special practices for the anus, and the sexual and urinary apparatus. There are practices called mudras and bandhas for awakening nerve fibres, creating sensations and introducing vibrations in different areas of the body where energy knots and nerve plexuses exist. Of the many nerves and nadis originating from and terminating in the mooladhara region, some extend up towards the spine, and some descend from the spine.

Vajra nadi starts on the left side of the anus and is directly related to the sexual and digestive systems, and also to the sciatic nerve. In sciatica, pain starts from the lower back and radiates down one or both legs. Sciatic pain indicates that there is an obstruction or blockage somewhere in vajra nadi, and that the sensations are not flowing as they should.

Shakti nadi is sometimes translated as meaning the rectum and bahishkrita dhauti is primarily a practice for cleansing shakti nadi. According to yogic science, shakti nadi starts from the right side of the anus and goes up to mooladhara and swadhisthana chakras, joining pingala nadi at swadhisthana chakra. Pingala nadi carries the solar force or prana shakti. This fourth practice of dhauti is extremely difficult and top secret.

Correct environment

This practice must be undertaken in a river where clean water is flowing. It cannot be done in a small amount of water, or in a well or reservoir where the water is stagnant. Therefore, given the state of the planet at present, it is not recommended that even qualified sadhakas attempt this practice. In the first place it would be extremely difficult to find a suitable water supply free from pollution. Then, if such a place were found, it would be best to give thanks to one's *ishta devata*, or preferred form of God, and protect it, rather than polluting it with one's own bodily wastes.

When Sage Gheranda was teaching in India, rivers were still treated with great respect as *devis*, divine beings. Just as

a child may be washed while sitting on its mother's lap, so a yogi would go to the river for self-purification. At that time, just a few centuries ago, people's everyday wastes were made use of in fertilizing the land, not completely wasted and misused by being poured into these streams of life that are so denigrated today.

Technique 2

After gaining proficiency in the first stage of the practice, the second half of the technique involves standing in water up to the navel and sucking water in through the anus by means of ashwini-vajroli mudra. When water enters, it is retained and then expelled so that any waste product in the bowel and around the anus is removed. Next, a little ghee or oil is taken on a finger and applied around the anus. The entire process takes place in the water.

Breathing: Sage Gheranda cautions that mahadhauti should only be undertaken if the breath can be retained in the abdomen for over one and a half hours, otherwise it is dangerous for the body. Mahadhauti, therefore, should not be performed by everyone. Also, during the practice one should be able to breathe comfortably at the rate of one breath a minute. Firstly, therefore, pranayama and other preliminary yoga practices must be perfected.

Benefits: When the finger is inserted and ghee applied, a little water also enters with the finger so the rectum is cleaned and with this practice sensations takes place in shakti nadi which awakens pingala nadi. After the awakening of pingala nadi, the pranas are awakened in the body, which is called *pranotthana*. Thereafter kundalini is awakened.

The four antar dhautis

These four practices (vatsara, varisara, vahnisara and bahishkrita) are techniques for making the body free from obstructions. The effects of antar dhauti particularly

affect the physical body and by practising them, annamaya kosha becomes free from disease and beneficial changes are brought about in the entire physical, energy and mental bodies, *annamaya*, *pranamaya* and *manomaya koshas*. However, by awakening any nerve centre or chakra through shatkarmas, the entire being is profoundly influenced.

DANTA DHAUTI (cleaning the head region)

Verse 25

दन्तमूलं जिह्वामूलं रन्ध्रं च कर्णयुग्मयोः ।
कपालरन्ध्रं पञ्चैते दन्तधौतिर्विधीयते ॥ 25 ॥

*Dantamoolam jihvaamoolam randhram cha karnayugmayoh;
Kapaalarandhra panchaite dantadhautirvidheeyate.*

There are five kinds of danta dhauti: dantamoola (cleaning the teeth), jihvamoola (cleaning the tongue), karnarandhra (cleaning the two ears) and kapalarandhra (cleaning the upper region of the head). Thus there are five in all.

The literal meaning of *danta dhauti* is cleaning the teeth, but here it means cleaning and purifying the region of the head. The first practice is *dantamoolam*, cleaning the teeth and gums. The second practice is *jihvaamoolam*, cleaning the tongue and its root. *Randhram cha karnayugmayoh* means cleaning the two ear orifices; the left and right ears are cleaned separately, so it is considered to be two dhautis. *Kapaalarandhra* means cleaning the upper portion of the frontal part of the head. These are the five types of danta dhauti.

These practices are utilized for complete purification of the *jnanendriyas*, the organs of sensory knowledge: ears, eyes, tongue, nose and teeth. It is the first duty of a yoga aspirant to clean the teeth, mouth, tongue, ears and nose

every morning. Knowledge of the world around one comes through the jnanendriyas, so if they are not kept clean, the perception will be defective. Maximum significance has been given to cleansing these sense organs.

I. DANTAMoola DHAUTI (cleaning the teeth)

Verses 26–27

खादिरेण रसेनाथ शुद्धमृत्तिकया तथा ।
मार्जयेद्दन्तमूलं च यावत्क्ल्विषमाहरेत् ॥ 26 ॥
दन्तमूलं पराधौतियोगिनां योग साधने ।
नित्यं कुर्यात्प्रभाते च दन्तरक्षाच योगवित् ।
दन्तमूलं धावनादिकार्येषु योगिनां मतम् ॥ 27 ॥

*Khaadirena rasenaatha shuddhamrittikayaa tathaa;
Maarjayeddantamoolam cha yaavatkilvishamaaharet. (26)*

*Dantamoolam paraadhautiriyoginaam yoga saadhane;
Nityam kuryaatprabhaate cha dantarakshaa cha yogavit;
Dantamoolam dhaavanaadikaaryeshu yoginaam matam. (27)*

Rub or massage the roots of the teeth with the juice of the khadira plant or with clean earth until the impurities are removed. Yogis must adopt this method every morning to protect their teeth. Those who know yoga consider dantamoola dhauti to be a significant part of the purification process.

This practice is for cleansing the teeth and gums. The modern method of using a toothbrush cleans the teeth but not the gums. The gums are extremely important as they provide the foundation for the teeth. If a finger is used instead of a brush, then the gums can also be rubbed and massaged. This suggestion is still applicable in this modern scientific era. One may use any type or brand of toothpaste and toothbrush, but afterwards the gums must be massaged

with a finger for two to four minutes. Sage Gheranda emphasizes that cleaning the roots of the teeth removes dirt and disorders and maintains healthy gums. Generally, people are very particular about diet and clothes, but often become careless about the mouth, and think that cleaning the teeth only means removing the surface dirt. Yogis take care of their teeth with the practice of dantamoola.

Technique

A special medicine prepared from the leaves of the khadira or catechu plant (*Acacia catechu*) is used. Soak the catechu leaves, put the juice on a finger and rub it on the roots of the teeth. Catechu is a medicinal plant used in ayurveda. If there is swelling in the gums, blisters in the mouth, toothache, cavities or bacteria, sucking catechu is suggested. Catechu has been in use from the earliest times to protect and strengthen the teeth.

If catechu is not available, then pure black or yellow clay dug out of wet soil can also be used. Ensure that it contains no small pieces of stone. The clay is made into a paste and rubbed on the roots of the gums for two to three minutes, followed by gargling. This is repeated five or six times.

Precautions: The catechu should be made into a fine powder; otherwise it can scratch the gums. Anyone who suffers from gum disease or dental caries should undertake this practice only after appropriate dental treatment.

Benefits: This practice maintains healthy gums and a strong blood flow.

It is well known that food particles collect in between the teeth and produce bacteria and germs which are harmful not only for the teeth, but also for the health of the body. After some time the effect of dental disorders is seen in one's overall health. If there is bleeding from the gums, pyorrhoea, blisters or ulcers in the mouth, blood or pus entering the

body from the mouth will affect the digestive system and other systems of the body as well. For example, dental decay can occasionally affect the heart. Premature loss of teeth is due to lack of proper care. Hence Sage Gheranda has mentioned cleanliness of the teeth and gums. According to yogis the gums should be massaged both inside and outside at least three times a day. This exerts pressure on the roots of the teeth and gums from both sides, which improves the blood flow to the cells. This is the first instruction.

Food also plays a significant role in maintaining the health of the teeth and gums. Sugary foods are harmful as the sugar is quickly converted into acid, which attacks the tooth enamel. Dental disorders can definitely be minimized by reducing sugar intake. The second instruction is that the mouth should be washed by gargling after eating, just as one washes the hands. Food particles which are stuck or hidden need to be removed. If anything is eaten, even a biscuit or a sweet, afterwards some water must be drunk. This is an important point.

Dantamoola dhauti is an important practice for those who wish to learn yogic practices. It should be regularly performed. The practices of antar dhauti lead to internal purification, and if daily precautions are taken to protect the teeth and gums, they will remain healthy and strong.

2. JIHVA SHODHANA (cleaning the tongue)

Verse 28

अथातः सम्प्रवक्ष्यामि जिह्वाशोधन कारणम् ।
जरामरणरोगादीन्नाशयेद्दीर्घलम्बिका ॥ 28 ॥

*Athaatah sampravakshyaami jihvaashodhana kaaranam;
Jaraamaranarogaadeennaashayeddeerghalambikaa.*

Now I will tell you the method for cleaning the tongue.
Lengthening of the tongue destroys old age, death and
disease.

By *jihva shodhana*, Sage Gheranda means cleaning the tongue. Cleaning the tongue is also called *jihvamoola dhauti*. Through this practice the length of the tongue is increased and health is optimized. Many kinds of chemical reactions take place in the body. New cells are generated, old ones die and waste material is expelled. The coating that develops on the tongue is cellular debris and micro-organisms which are not needed by the body. It is recommended that these impurities be removed daily by the practice of *jihva dhauti*.

Verses 29–31

तर्जनीमध्यमानामा अङ्गुलित्रययोगतः ।
वेशयेद्गलमध्ये तु मार्जयेल्लम्बिकामूलम् ।
शनैः शनैः मार्जयित्वा कफदोषं निवारयेत् ॥ 29 ॥
मार्जयेन्नवनीतेन दोहयेच्च पुनः पुनः ।
तदग्रं लोहयन्त्रेण कर्षयित्वा शनैः शनैः ॥ 30 ॥
नित्यं कुर्यात्प्रयत्नेन रवेरुदयकेऽस्तके ।
एवं कृते च नित्यं सा लम्बिका दीर्घतां व्रजेत् ॥ 31 ॥

*Tarjaneemadhyamaanaamaa angulitrayaogatah;
Veshayedgalamadhye tu maarjayellambikaamoolam;
Shanaih shanaih maarjayitvaa kaphadosham nivaarayet. (29)*

*Maarjayennavaneetena dohayechcha punah punah;
Tadagram lohayantrana karshayitvaa shanaih shanaih. (30)*

*Nityam kuryaatprayatnena raverudayake'stake;
Evam krite cha nityam saa lambikaa deerghataam vrajet. (31)*

The root of the tongue should be cleaned by inserting the index finger, middle finger and ring finger in the throat. Kapha disorders (phlegm) are removed by slowly and gently rubbing the tongue. Once this cleaning and rubbing is over, apply a little butter on the tongue. Again perform the action like that of milking a cow. Thereafter, stretch the tongue out with the help of small tongs. The length of the tongue increases by doing this practice daily at the time of sunrise and sunset.

Technique

First, clean the tongue by inserting the index, middle and ring fingers into the throat and rub over the tongue from the root removing the mucus. Then apply some butter to the tongue. Perform *dohan kriya*, the milking action, by holding the sides of the tongue with the thumb and fingers and gently squeeze and massage the tongue. The butter makes the tongue slippery and the milking action becomes easy. In order to lengthen it, after milking, the tongue is slowly stretched out and held with a pair of clean iron tongs or if small tongs are not available, the tongue can be held between the thumb and fingers. This should be done daily for two or three minutes.

Frequency: This practice is to be done seven to ten times every morning and evening.

Precautions: The practice is to be done gently, especially if there are blisters on the tongue. The fingernails should be closely trimmed. Do not force the fingers in too deeply as this may hurt or injure the larynx.

Benefits: The tongue has important sensory and motor functions. As it is richly supplied with nerves, there is a

particularly strong connection with the brain. According to yoga, if the tongue is diseased, the thinking becomes dull and the breathing process may also be impaired. Therefore, proper care and maintenance of the tongue is necessary. By massaging the tongue with a milking motion, the mucus that collects in the throat and windpipe is cleared. This massage is the best means of cleaning the tongue.

A long tongue is considered more useful for speech. Speech disorders can occur because of a short tongue. This practice makes the muscles of the tongue flexible. Daily practice lengthens the tongue. It is said that the tongue of a yoga practitioner should be so long that it touches *bhrumadhya*, the eyebrow centre, or at least the end of the nose. This technique also removes hiccups.

3. KARNARANDHRA DHAUTI (cleaning the ears)

Verse 32

तर्जन्यनामिका योगान्मार्जयेत्कर्णरन्ध्रयोः ।
नित्यमभ्यास योगेन नादान्तरं प्रकाशयेत् ॥ 32 ॥

*Tarjanyanaamika yogaanmaarjayetkarnarandhrayoh;
Nityamabhyaasa yogena naadaantaram prakaashayet.*

Clean the orifices of both ears with the index and ring fingers. By practising this daily, nada or inner sound may be heard.

Karna dhauti is counted as the third and fourth types of danta dhauti. The method is the same, but Sage Gheranda presents them as separate practices for the two ears. *Karna* means ear. *Karna dhauti* is the method of cleaning the ear orifices with the index or ring finger. The structure of the outer ear is like a conch. A tube or canal from the outer ear leads to the internal parts of the ear, which ultimately

connect to the brain. This canal is about four centimetres long. It is lined with fine hairs and contains glands which produce wax. Foreign particles that enter the ears are trapped by the fine hairs and become stuck in the wax, which can then be cleaned out. By this specialized arrangement the internal hearing apparatus of the ears is protected.

There are many modern methods of cleaning the ear canals. Many companies sell cotton buds (cotton on the end of a plastic stick). According to yoga, however, cleansing should be done with a finger. Plastic sticks and matchsticks are very thin. According to yoga and modern medicine, it is both unnecessary and potentially harmful to stick such objects into the ears. If they go deep inside by mistake, the ear drum can be damaged. A finger, however, will not go in deep enough to cause such damage.

Sometimes excessive wax is produced, blocking the ear canal. This can cause hearing difficulties. In such conditions, doctors may rinse the ears with water, pushing warm water into the ear canal with a syringe, to soften and flush out the wax.

Technique 1

Karnarandhra dhauti should only be done with either the index or ring finger. Wet the finger, so that it adheres to the skin at the mouth of the ear canal. Next, slowly insert the finger with pressure and try to reach the inside of the ear by rotating the finger in a circular movement. When practised correctly, a vacuum-like effect is created so that suction takes place and gently starts pulling out the dirt and wax from inside. This is the practice recommended by Sage Gheranda.

Technique 2

An alternative technique is to boil two pieces of garlic in sesame oil or any other pure edible oil. Previously, a piece of cotton wool or the end of a finger was dipped in the oil so that the oil could drip, drop by drop, into the

ear. Today a sterile ear dropper bought from a chemist can be used. Let the oil drip into the ear, carefully putting only two to four drops in each ear. Any dirt and wax will swell up and is easily removed by cleaning with the finger.

Benefits: Wax collects continuously inside the ear tubes. If the ears are not cleaned regularly, pieces of dirt accumulate and block the ears. According to yogis, when the ring or index finger is put inside the ear and moved briskly, dirt and wax stick to the finger and are removed.

Also, by briskly rotating the finger, the blood flow within the ear is enhanced, which cannot be achieved with a stick. This increased blood flow may help prevent ear diseases. Part of the skin of the ears is connected to the parasympathetic vagus nerve, the stimulation of which relaxes certain internal organs (for example, it slows the heart rate). With this process balance is achieved in the autonomic nervous system.

When the ears remain clean, the hearing capacity is enhanced and slowly, with regular practice, the practitioner becomes capable of listening to the internal *nada* or sound. *Nityam abhyaasa yogena naadaantaram prakaashayet*, with daily practice *nada* is heard.

Nada yoga

When there is dirt in the ears, external sounds become faint. It is an external physical symptom, but yogis feel that it also reduces the power of the sense of hearing. *Nada yoga* is an independent branch of yoga. *Nada yoga* means hearing internal sound in a state of *dharana*, concentration, and *dhyana*, meditation.

According to *nada yoga*, the hearing sense not only catches external sounds, but also subtle sounds that are created inside. In the absence of strong hearing, subtle sounds cannot be heard. But when a person progresses in *sadhana* and attains the state of *dharana* or *dhyana*, one enters into new depths of consciousness by catching hold of

those subtle internal sounds with the awareness. This is one technique of nada yoga.

In the practice of nada yoga, first of all one listens to the physical sounds created inside the body, like the sounds of the breath, blood circulation, heartbeat, etc. While listening to them, a state of consciousness is reached where different sounds start to be heard. Sometimes the sound of a bell is heard, sometimes the sound of a conch, a flute, or a waterfall. These subtle sounds keep on changing. Beyond gross sound, in the subtle state itself, extremely subtle sounds can be heard. As one-pointedness increases and one goes deep inside, nada like the sound of the vibration in an atom can be heard.

This is the practice of nada yoga. Sage Gheranda explains karna dhauti for the health of the ears, but his technique is also to help improve the hearing capacity. This is a practical aid in making consciousness subtle so that nada is heard.

4. KAPALARANDHRA DHAUTI (cleaning the upper region of the head)

Verses 33–34

वृद्धाङ्गुष्ठेन दक्षेण मार्जयेद्भालरन्ध्रकम् ।
एवमभ्यासयोगेन कफदोषं निवारयेत् ॥ 33 ॥
नाडी निर्मलतां याति दिव्यदृष्टिः प्रजायते ।
निद्रान्ते भोजनान्ते च दिवान्ते च दिने दिने ॥ 34 ॥

*Vriddhangushthena dakshena maarjayedbhaalarandhrakam;
Evamabhyasayogena kaphadosham nivaarayet. (33)*

*Nadee nirmalataam yaati divyadrishtih prajaayate;
Nidraante bhojanaante cha divaante cha dine dine. (34)*

Massage the forehead with the right hand thumb. With this type of practice one is relieved of kapha dosha. The nadis are purified and divine vision is attained. Practise daily at the end of sleep, after food and before sleep.

There are several practices of *kapalarandhra*, cleaning the openings in the skull. *Bhalarandhra* is usually interpreted to mean the forehead or the depression above the nose just above the eyebrow centre. Sage Gheranda therefore advocates this practice to stimulate the 'third eye' of insight. This faculty of *divya drishti*, divine vision, is associated with ajna chakra.

Another practice of *kapalarandhra*, also deals with the spiritual nature of humankind, and relates to sahasrara chakra and *brahmarandhra*, the opening to higher consciousness, at the crown of the head. *Brahmarandhra*, which is sometimes called *kapalarandhra*, is a door. If this part of the skull is observed in a newly born baby, a small depression or even a pulse beat against the skin will be noticed. There is an opening there called the fontanelle, which closes as a person grows. This region is associated with the cerebral cortex, which is responsible for many higher functions, including speech and decision making.

This area is in the region of sahasrara. When real yogis release prana from their bodies, they do so consciously. When a yogi does not want rebirth on earth, the prana is released from this exit only, i.e. from sahasrara chakra. It means that the life force enters and leaves the body at *brahmarandhra*.

Technique I

Once again, the technique given by Sage Gheranda is very simple and straightforward, but has long-lasting, subtle benefits.

As a regular practice, on first waking, after meals and before sleeping, one should consciously relax. With the forehead relaxed, and preferably with the eyes closed, lightly massage the part of the forehead just above the nose with the right thumb.

Benefits: The light pressure and stimulation helps release mucous blockages from the nasal cavity and related sinuses, balancing kapha. It also helps one to centre, to relax further, and to be aware of one's subtle nature,

awakening divya drishti. According to Sage Gheranda this practice cools the brain and is also useful for cataracts and other eye disorders. It is also said to lower high blood pressure and protect against colds and coughs.

Technique 2

Another very beneficial technique of kapalarandhra employs the cooling quality of water.

Joining the fingers and thumb of the right hand, make a cup-like shape with the palm. Take water in the palm and lean forward and pat the upper portion of the head with the palm three or four times, so that the brahmarandhra becomes wet. Repeat this process four or five times.

Frequency and time of practice: Practise on waking, after the midday meal and in the evening. One point should be clarified. If there is hair on the head, the water does not reach the skin unless the hair gets completely wet. Hair creates an obstruction to this practice. If it is not possible to practise three times a day, practise at least at the time of bathing.

Benefits: Kapalarandhra dhauti provides coolness and calmness to the brain, so that freshness and creativity are experienced. This practice is most helpful during the hot summer season. The aim of this dhauti kriya is to provide coolness in brahmarandhra, not only cleansing, because if this part of the body remains cool, there is an experience of alertness, mental agility and freshness. Washing the head makes one feel good. Even just pouring water over the head makes one feel fresh, whether it is summer or winter.

HRID DHAUTI (cleaning the heart region)

Verse 35

हृद्भौतिं त्रिविधां कुर्याद्दण्डवमनवाससा ॥ 35 ॥

Hrid dhautim trividhaam kuryaaddandavamanavaasasaa.

There are three types of hrid dhauti: using a stick, regurgitating water, and using cloth.

Hrid means heart, *dhauti* means cleanliness. The heart region here includes the oesophagus, lungs and stomach. Cleansing the oesophagus is easy, even cleaning the stomach is simple, but cleaning the lungs is more complex. These three processes are grouped under the heading of hrid dhauti.

The method of hrid dhauti explained here works by creating a vacuum in the chest by which method kapha and impurities collected inside the lungs and windpipe can be expelled.

The practice of hrid dhauti can be done in three ways. The first type is *danda dhauti*, which uses a *danda*, a stick made from sugarcane, the stem of a banana tree, or a thin turmeric root. The second type is *vaman dhauti*, using water. The third type is *vastra dhauti*, which uses *vastra*, a piece of cloth.

I. DANDA DHAUTI (cleaning with a stick)

Verses 36–37

रम्भादण्डं हरिद्दण्डं वेत्रदण्डं तथैव च ।
हृन्मध्ये चालयित्वा तु पुनः प्रत्याहरेच्छनैः ॥ 36 ॥
कफं पित्तं तथा क्लेदं रेचयेदूर्ध्ववर्त्तना ।
दण्डधौतिविधानेन हृद्रोगं नाशयेद् ध्रुवम् ॥ 37 ॥

*Rambhaadandam hariddandam vetradandam tathaiva cha;
Hrinmadhye chaalayitvaa tu punah pratyaaharechchhanaih. (36)*

*Kapham pittam tathaa kledam rechayedoordhvavartmanaa;
Dandadhautividhaanena hridrogam naashayed dhruvam. (37)*

The stem of a soft portion of the banana tree, a thin turmeric stem or a sugarcane stem should be repeatedly inserted (through the mouth) and then slowly withdrawn from the middle chest. Then kapha, pitta and mucus should be evacuated through the mouth. This practice definitely destroys even heart disease.

Preparation

The stem of a banana tree, a turmeric stem or a properly cleaned sugarcane stem is carefully prepared. The trunk of a banana tree is peeled down to a rod of about one cm in diameter, depending on the size of the throat. Normally the rod should be 10–12 cm long and very thin. The banana or turmeric stem is first boiled in water to soften it. Ghee is applied to the rod so that it slips into the throat easily.

Technique

When the head is raised to a particular position, the oesophagus straightens. As may be seen in circus performances, some people can insert a sword inside the throat. Similarly, a hatha yogi inserts the stem, and keeps holding it.

While retaining the breath inside, the rod is inserted as deeply as possible and slowly rotated. This may induce the desire to vomit, but do not do so. Instead, the stem is removed and the mucus and other waste matter are spat out. In order to do this practice, breath retention must first be perfected. As long as one is breathing in and out, this practice cannot be done because the throat and windpipe will be moving. The rod is inserted only while retaining the breath.

Precautions: Danda dhauti is a very difficult practice. Although the technique has been described here,

practising it is not advised. It is not considered suitable for everyone and should not be practised by anyone without expert personal guidance. A much safer form of hrid dhauti is vaman dhauti.

Benefits: The inner walls of the food pipe are covered with kapha, pitta and mucus. When this matter accumulates, it can enter the larynx and affect the respiratory system, reducing the breathing capacity, and producing a wheezing sound while inhaling.

With danda dhauti, kapha, pitta and *kleda*, mucus, are expelled with *rechaka kriya*, exhalation.

2. VAMAN DHAUTI (cleaning by regurgitation)

Verses 38–39

भोजनान्ते पिबेद्वारि चाकण्ठं पूरितं सुधीः ॥ 38 ॥

उर्ध्वा दृष्टिं क्षणं कृत्वा तज्जलं वमयेत्पुनः ।

नित्यमभ्यासयोगेन कफपित्तं निवारयेत् ॥ 39 ॥

Bhojanaante pibedvaari chaakantham pooritam sudheeh. (38)

Urdhvaa drishtim kshanam kritvaa tadjalam vamayetpunah;

Nityamabhyasayogena kaphapittam nivaarayet. (39)

After a meal the practitioner should drink water up to the throat and, after looking upwards for a moment, expel the water by vomiting. Kapha and pitta disorders are removed.

When food is eaten, it is first chewed and mixed with saliva which contains enzymes that begin the digestion of carbohydrates. During this process it forms a soft lump called a bolus. The bolus travels down the throat into the oesophagus and thence into the stomach, which is like a J-shaped sac. The stomach is situated in the upper abdomen just below the diaphragm, has a capacity of about 1.5 litres and expands when food is eaten. It has a muscular wall which

is thicker than the walls of the oesophagus and intestines. There are an estimated 35,000,000 gastric glands lining this wall, which secrete mucus and digestive juices. The lining of the stomach sheds about half a million cells per minute and is completely renewed every three days.

The function of the stomach is to break down food into fine particles and churn it with digestive juices before releasing it in steady spurts to the small intestine. On average more than two litres of digestive juices are produced by the stomach daily, in particular hydrochloric acid, which is important for the digestion of protein. Mucus is designed to protect the lining of the stomach from this acid. Imbalances in acid and mucus production can lead to hyperacidity and peptic ulcers.

Food remains in the stomach for up to four hours before being propelled into the small intestine. After nutrients and water are absorbed through the small and large intestines, solid waste matter is expelled through the anus.

There are two types of vaman dhauti: kunjal kriya and vyaghra kriya. Kunjal kriya is done on an empty stomach and vyaghra kriya is done after meals. Kunjal kriya is done when one feels normal and healthy. Vyaghra kriya should be practised when there is a disorder or discomfort in the stomach. In the above verse, vyaghra kriya is described.

1. Kunjal kriya

This practice cleans the digestive tract from the stomach to the mouth. A quantity of salty lukewarm water is drunk and regurgitated. Kunjal is very beneficial for keeping the digestive system clean and healthy, and for removing acidity and digestive ailments.

Preparation

Wash the hands and make sure the nails are well trimmed. Dissolve two teaspoonfuls of salt in hot water and add enough cold water to make up two litres of salty lukewarm water. The water should be body temperature.

According to yoga if the water is lukewarm and a little salt is added, it is not absorbed so readily by the body and can be flushed out by the practice of kunjla. Any water or salt which remains in the stomach after the practice is absorbed or will ultimately be excreted via the kidneys in urine, or via the skin in sweat.

Technique

Standing up straight, quickly drink at least six glasses of the prepared water, one after the other, until the stomach cannot hold any more. This may seem difficult but it is essential to fill the stomach completely. On average, six glasses of water (approximately two litres) are sufficient to fill the stomach.

When the stomach is full, the urge to vomit will come automatically. Lean forward, keeping the trunk parallel to the ground. Open the mouth and place the middle and index fingers of the right hand



as far back on the tongue as possible. Gently rub and press the back of the tongue, moving the fingers slowly forward and backward. The water will be expelled without further effort. If this does not happen, it either means that the fingers have not gone far enough down the throat or that the tongue is not being pressed.

The body needs to relax to let the water come out freely. During the expulsion of water the fingers may be removed from the mouth if necessary. When the water stops gushing out, again place the fingers inside the mouth and repeat the process until the stomach is completely empty.

As this tends to release mucus into the nose, jala neti should be practised after kunjla.

Frequency and time of practice: Bearing in mind the capacity of the body and the person's health, this practice should be undertaken only once a week unless an experienced yoga teacher advises otherwise. The ideal time for kunjal kriya is early in the morning before breakfast. It should not be done outside if the weather is cold, as kunjal temporarily renders the stomach more sensitive to cold.

Precautions: Kunjal kriya should not be done for at least four hours after meals to allow sufficient time for the stomach to empty. As it removes some of the stomach lining temporarily, it is advised to eat a light meal half an hour after completing the practice.

Contra-indications: This practice increases blood pressure so it should not be attempted by people suffering from high blood pressure. People suffering from peptic ulcers, hernia, raised intracranial pressure, diabetes with eye problems or any kind of heart disease should not do this practice. Though kunjal kriya removes hyperacidity from the stomach, practising it for hyperacidity is not recommended as the risk of harm outweighs the potential benefits. It is not recommended during pregnancy.

Kunjal should not be attempted without direct guidance, otherwise problems can occur. In fact, no yogic practice should be undertaken without correct guidance.

Benefits: Kunjal kriya is considered useful for a healthy person to help keep the body free from disease. It cleans the upper digestive tract, has a profound effect on the nervous system, and is therefore beneficial for general health. It is especially useful for people suffering from kapha and pitta disorders.

This practice washes the digestive system from stomach to mouth, helping to remove and prevent diseases in this region caused by the accumulation of toxic matter and general impurities. It helps to eradicate bad breath, phlegm in the throat and some types of sore throat.

Salty water reduces the secretion of acid by the glands in the stomach, which enhances the stomach's digestive efficacy.

Asthmatics obtain great relief from this practice. Kunjal can be practised at the time of an asthma attack. In this situation it is imperative that the stomach is completely filled with water to obtain best results. When the person starts vomiting, the airways, which are tight and contracted in an asthma attack, are relaxed, providing immediate relief.

2. Vyaghra kriya

Sage Gheranda's aim in this verse is to explain that indigestible food should be expelled. Waste that has passed into the intestines will be expelled through the anus, but waste that remains in the stomach should be expelled by vomiting. This technique is sometimes called *anna vaman dhauti*, expelling food.

Technique

If food remains undigested three hours after a meal, drink at least six glasses of salty lukewarm water. For a few moments look upwards and then expel the water. This is vyaghra kriya.

Time of practice: Vyaghra kriya may be practised three hours after eating food. According to yoga, food should pass through the stomach within three hours of eating. If this has not happened, the food is regarded as indigestible and should be thrown out by expulsion. If the food is rotten or the stomach is gorged beyond capacity, the practice can be done earlier. Animals such as lions, tigers (*vyaghras*) and dogs are known to gorge themselves and regurgitate whatever is indigestible.

Frequency: Vyaghra kriya is only recommended once a week in special circumstances.

Precautions: The only purpose of vyaghra kriya is to expel undigested food. It should be done only when necessary.

Twenty-five to thirty minutes after the practice, some light liquid food such as milk or thin kheer, rice pudding made with milk should be eaten, because this practice is acting against the nature of the stomach.

Once food enters the stomach, the sphincter between the stomach and oesophagus is automatically closed and all the energies of the body are focused on moving the food down into the intestines and on digesting it. Yogis consider digestion as a function of the downward moving apana vayu, along with the expulsion of waste. So when food is moved in the opposite direction, as in vyaghra kriya, it must be done under competent guidance, otherwise it can be harmful. Sometimes even healthy people may feel a little pressure in the chest or experience a feeling of burning or acidity.

Contra-indications: As for kunjla kriya.

Benefits: If indigestible food remains in the stomach, belching, bad breath, reflux dyspepsia or indigestion may arise. Vyaghra kriya prevents burdening the intestines with an unnecessary load of indigestible food. If extremely impure, heavy and rotten food is consumed and remains undigested, the body may vomit as a last resort. Usually the body tries to digest whatever is dumped in the stomach, which leads to heaviness, nausea and indigestion for many hours while the digestive system returns to normal. Though this practice looks uninviting, it takes only a few minutes and prevents much discomfort and inconvenience.

3. VASTRA DHAUTI (cleansing with cloth)

Verses 40–41

चतुरङ्गुल विस्तारं सूक्ष्मवस्त्र शनैर्ग्रासेत् ।
पुनः प्रत्याहरेदेतत्प्रोच्यत धौतिकर्मकम् ॥ 40 ॥
गुल्म ज्वरप्लीहकुष्ठकफपित्तं विनश्यति ।
आरोग्यं बलपुष्टिश्च भवेत्तस्य दिने दिने ॥ 41 ॥

*Chaturangula vistaaram sookshmavastram shanaigraset;
Punah pratyaaaharedetatprochyate dhautikarmakam. (40)*

*Gulma jvarapleehaakushthakaphapittam vinashyati;
Arogyam balapushtishcha bhavettasya dine dine. (41)*

A roll of fine cotton cloth four fingers wide should be gradually swallowed and then taken out slowly. The practice of vastra dhauti rectifies skin problems, fever, enlarged spleen, leprosy and kapha (phlegm) and pitta (bile) disorders. It keeps the body free of disease, increases stamina and cheerfulness, and promotes healthy growth.

Vastra dhauti is a method of cleaning the throat, oesophagus and stomach with a length of cloth, *vastra*. Even though the practice is difficult, it remains prevalent because of its many benefits. Sage Gheranda says that this technique cures kapha and pitta disorders and is also useful for kidney problems, leprosy and skin infections. It is especially effective for those who suffer from asthma.

In *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*, vastra dhauti is the only example of dhauti described in the text, which perhaps shows the usefulness of this practice. It shows that Yogi Swatmarama agrees with Sage Gheranda as to the therapeutic aspects of this practice. Many people begin yoga because they are interested in improving their health through its cleansing practices. For both Yogi Swatmarama and Sage Gheranda, however, their real aim in teaching these practices is as part

of yoga sadhana, preparing the practitioner for pranayama and higher practices.

Preparation

Care must be taken with all the preparations and stages of the practice. Ensure that enough time available for the practice without being disturbed. When learning, be sure to be guided by an experienced teacher.

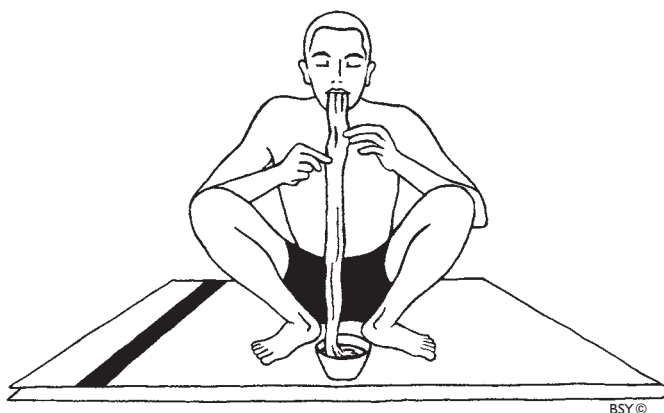
The cloth used for the practice of this dhauti kriya should be four fingers wide, i.e. about eight to ten cm wide, and at least six metres in length. It should be cotton and very thin and soft, not at all rough. Beginners should start with a roll just two and a half cm wide and three metres long. When the practice can be done easily, the length and width of the cloth can be increased.

When cutting the cloth to the required size, ensure that all the loose fibres along the edges are removed properly so they do not get stuck inside the stomach. It is possible to buy a sterile, lightweight cotton bandage from a chemist for the purpose, but it should be checked carefully for loose threads.

The cloth must be prepared with maximum care. After cutting and removing any loose fibres, the cloth is washed and boiled in water, then soaked in lukewarm water so that it becomes even softer. Some people soak the roll either in milk or milk mixed with sugar. If this method makes the practice easier, it can be used for a few days to prepare the mind, otherwise plain hot water is best.

Technique

Sit in a squatting position, or if that is not comfortable, practise while sitting on a stool or a small chair. Keep the water and the prepared cloth in a bowl or mug between the two feet. Once comfortably positioned, start the first stage of the practice.



Stage I (ingestion): Take hold of one end of the cloth and fold its two corners in such a way that it becomes slightly pointed – this allows it to pass down the throat more easily. Placing the pointed end in the mouth, slowly chew it in so that it can be swallowed. The cloth should be held with the index fingers and thumbs. Taking three to six cm of cloth into the mouth at a time, chew it slightly, so that saliva lubricates the cloth, but the cloth does not get torn. Once it is adequately chewed, take one sip of lukewarm water and keep swallowing the cloth with the water. Again three to six cm of cloth is taken in the mouth, chewed, lubricated and swallowed with a sip of water. This enables the cloth to pass down the throat easily. Swallowing should be done with patience and caution. Do not collect too much cloth inside the mouth, otherwise it will bunch up and be difficult to swallow. It is better to pass the cloth down the throat little by little. Initially, due to lack of practice, there will be a strange feeling in the throat as if something is stuck there. When the cloth is inside the throat, one may feel like coughing or there might be a feeling of irritation in the throat. If this happens, stop for a while and drink some water. A vomiting sensation may be felt, but that feeling should be controlled.

On the first day it is enough for the cloth to go in about 15 cm and then be taken out. After practising for two or three days it may go 30 cm inside and then pulled out. After a few more days' practice it may go 45 cm inside, and then pulled out. Gradually, with practice, at least five metres out of a total of six metres should go inside.

Precautions: The cloth should always be kept in close contact with the tongue. If it is in contact with the palate, it obstructs respiration, triggers a cough reflex and the cloth comes out.

The second precaution is that the cloth, lubricated with saliva, should be passed down the throat bit by bit. It is helpful to drink a little water in between. Initially the cloth may keep coming out and it may take some practice before being able to swallow it, until the technique is mastered. Keep trying to swallow the cloth each time with courage and patience.

After practising for a few days or weeks the cloth will start sliding down the oesophagus quite quickly. Always ensure that at least 30 cm of cloth remains outside and keep a firm hold of it.

A seasoned practitioner of *vastra dhauti* can swallow a length of cloth twelve arms' in length in just five minutes. Even if one does not proceed to the second stage, do not allow the cloth to remain in the stomach for more than five minutes. Instead, slowly pull it out.

Stage 2 (churning): After swallowing the cloth, practise *nauli kriya*, keeping the cloth inside. Initially this abdominal churning should only be practised for one minute. Even an experienced practitioner should not practise *nauli* for more than five minutes. The cloth should not be kept inside the abdomen any longer because it could slip down into the intestines. The abdomen is rotated or churned so that the cloth reaches all parts of the stomach and collects *kapha* and *pitta*, mucus and excess digestive juices. After that, the cloth is slowly pulled out.

Frequency and time of practice: According to the rules of yoga this practice should not be done more than once a week. It is not to be done daily. It should be practised when the stomach is completely empty. An appropriate time is before breakfast.

Precautions: Vastra dhauti is a stronger practice than kunjil and can sometimes improve conditions that are beyond the scope of kunjil. However, it is also more difficult to perform. In the beginning this practice must be done under the guidance of a competent teacher. Do not let go of the cloth once it has been swallowed and ensure an adequate amount is left unswallowed. Do not practise nauli for more than five minutes. Do not allow the cloth to stay in the stomach for more than five minutes.

When the cloth comes out, it is no longer thin, but quite thick, because it is bringing kapha or mucus with it. This does not always happen in kunjil. When the cloth is pulled out, it looks as if it is completely drenched in ghee, and feels slippery from top to bottom.

Contra-indications: This practice should not be performed by people suffering from hypertension, heart disease, stroke, peptic ulcer, gastritis, during illness or when the body is in a weakened state. It should not be practised until six months after surgery, or during pregnancy.

Benefits: The cloth wipes the walls of the stomach thoroughly, which enables digestive juices to be secreted efficiently. The practice of vastra dhauti affects the entire body and is a time-tested cure for people who suffer from kapha disorders or excess phlegm, such as asthmatics. An asthma attack will be terminated if this practice is undertaken. It is essential for the prevention and cure of asthma.

It may be wondered why this practice is helpful, given that asthma is a disorder of the respiratory system, and vastra dhauti directly affects the digestive system. The answer lies in the fact that nerves and nadis link the digestive system with the lungs and brain. It should be

remembered that the nervous system (including the brain) plays an important role in asthma. It is not just the respiratory system or the lungs that are affected.

This practice has also been considered useful for stomach ulcers, skin problems or diseases, and even fever. The verse says, *Gulma jvarapleehaakushtham kaphapittam vinashyati*, which means that gas disorders, fever, skin diseases, leprosy, kapha and pitta disorders are eradicated by this practice. *Aarogyam balapushtishcha bhavettasya dine dine*, and with regular practice one becomes free from disease with increased stamina and energy.

In order to gain the full benefits from vastra dhauti, at the end of the practice kunjhal and jala neti should be performed. Vastra dhauti removes dirt from the walls of the stomach by mopping, whereas kunjhal kriya washes them and jala neti cleanses the inside of the nose.

Complete practice of hrid dhauti

Hrid dhauti, therefore, has these three practices. The first practice is danda dhauti, which is difficult, secret and not applicable to all. The second practice is vaman dhauti, which is of two types: jala vaman and anna vaman, known respectively as kunjhal and vyaghra kriya. The third type of hrid dhauti is vastra dhauti, which is difficult but especially beneficial for the body.

MOOLA SHODHANA (anal cleansing)

Verses 42–44

अपानक्रूरता तावद्यावन्मूलं न शोधयेत् ।
तस्मात्सर्वप्रयत्नेन मूलशोधनमाचरेत् ॥ 42 ॥
पीतमूलस्य दण्डेन मध्यमाङ्गुलिनाऽपि वा ।
यत्नेन क्षालयेद्गुह्यं वारिणा च पुनः पुनः ॥ 43 ॥
वारयेत्कोष्ठकाठिन्यमामाजीर्णं निवारयेत् ।
कारणं कान्तिपुष्ट्योश्च दीपनं वह्निमण्डलम् ॥ 44 ॥

*Apaanakroorataa taavadyaavanmoolam na shodhayet;
Tasmaatsarvaprayatnena moolashodhanamaacharet. (42)*

*Peetamoolasya dandena madhyamaangulinaa'pi vaa;
Yatnena kshaalayedguhyam vaarinaa cha punah punah. (43)*

*Vaarayetkoshthakaathinyamaamaajeerna nivaarayet;
Karanam kaantipushtyosha deepanam vahnimandalam. (44)*

Disorders of apana vayu cannot be removed without performing moola shodhana or anal cleansing. Cleaning of the anus is essential with a turmeric root or the middle finger combined with repeated washing with water. This practice removes hard faeces and constipation, the body becomes graceful and healthy and the digestive fire is stimulated.

Moola shodhana is the last practice of the dhauti techniques. Its literal meaning is cleansing the root of the body. The root of the body is the rectum, so moola shodhana means cleaning the area of the rectum. In verse 42, it is said, *Apaana-kroorataa taavadyaavan-moolam na shodhayet*, as long as the root portion cannot be cleaned apana vayu becomes cruel or ruthless, which means that disorders take place in apana vayu. Therefore, the function and importance of apana vayu needs to be understood.

Pancha prana vayu – five energy flows

First there is *maha prana*, the great prana that energizes the universe. Then there are the five prana vayus, which are subordinate manifestations of maha prana. In order to understand this practice these five prana vayus need to be briefly introduced because they form the basis of yogic therapy. Sometimes they are simply called the five *vayus*, flows of energy, and sometimes they are called the five *pranas*, energies.

The five pranas regulate and coordinate the various organs and systems of the body. According to the science of yoga the practitioner can skilfully purify and work with these five pranas: prana, apana, samana, udana and vyana.

Prana: The first prana vayu is simply called *prana*. Its jurisdiction is the chest or heart region, between the throat and the diaphragm. Through the medium of prana vayu, the lungs and heart are maintained, and breathing and blood circulation controlled. Any deficiency or defect in prana vayu will lead to malfunctioning of the heart and lungs.

Apana: The second prana vayu is *apana*, which is downward flowing. It is situated in the pelvic region between the navel and perineum. Apana sustains the functions of the kidneys, bladder, bowels, excretory and reproductive organs, and is responsible for the expulsion of waste matter from the body, including gas, faeces and urine. The ejaculation of sperm, monthly cleansing of the womb and the expulsion of the foetus in childbirth are all part of the work of renewal performed by apana vayu. If some defect takes place in its flow, diseases may develop in the kidneys and excretory system, or disorders such as constipation or haemorrhoids.

Samana: The third prana vayu is *samana*, which distributes energy equally in the body. Its region is between the navel and the diaphragm. Samana vayu flows sideways. Samana activates and maintains the digestive organs, liver, stomach, pancreas, duodenum, spleen and the small and large intestines, and controls the digestive process. Any disturbance to samana vayu will lead to indigestion and diseases of the stomach.

Udana: The fourth vayu is *udana*, which controls the sensory organs, the movement of the legs, arms and neck, and the activities of the brain. If there is any disturbance in udana vayu, disorders such as paralysis of the hands and feet may take place.

Vyana: The fifth vayu is *vyana*. The word vyana is derived from the word *vyapata*, meaning that which pervades the entire body and which flows in every nadi of the body. Vyana is the reserve energy. If there is a deficiency in any of the other prana vayus, vyana immediately rushes to its rescue. It also regulates muscular movement, aids in sending impulses to different parts of the body, and causes perspiration and goose flesh.

Apana vayu is corrected by the practice of moola shodhana.

Preparation

According to the tradition, a turmeric root is used for moola shodhana. *Peetamoolasya dandena* refers to a stem of turmeric made from the root of the plant. Turmeric has many healing qualities such as controlling infection and purifying the blood. If any part of the body is wounded, turmeric can be used as an antiseptic. Its use in basti regulates the blood flow in the lower portion of the large intestine, the rectum, enabling easy evacuation of the bowels and prevention of constipation.

A soft turmeric stem or the middle finger is used in this practice. The turmeric stem should have the same dimensions as and be no bigger than the middle finger. The soft turmeric root should be cleaned properly and the outer layer peeled off so that its juice starts dripping.

Technique

It is essential to sit in a squatting position for this practice. This position opens up the anus and the thighs exert pressure on the stomach, which helps move the faeces downwards.

While squatting, gently insert the tumeric stem into the anus. Keep it inside for two or three minutes so that the juice of the peeled stem spreads inside the anus and rectum. One quality of turmeric is that it absorbs toxins, so all toxic matter or wastes of the body are pulled towards the turmeric stem. After two or three minutes the stem is removed and disposed of.

This practice cleans the anal region. If the anus is hurt during the practice, or if one has painful piles, the turmeric root acts as an antiseptic agent and assists the area to heal. If a turmeric root is not available, the middle finger can be used. Be sure the nail is clipped short. If the finger does not go in easily, contract the sphincter muscles and then release them, keeping the finger slightly inside. This will definitely help the process, but do not apply too much pressure. However far the finger goes in easily is sufficient. Traditionally ghee, clarified butter made from cow's milk, is applied to the finger. It is then inserted about 4 cm into the anus and rotated clockwise and anticlockwise so that the ghee is thoroughly applied. Today an antiseptic or at least sterile Vaseline can be obtained from a chemist, but pure ghee has many medicinal properties.

Remove the finger, wash it properly, apply ghee and once more insert and rotate it inside as before. This process can be repeated several times, but two or three minutes of practice are sufficient.

Precautions: Trim the finger nails properly. The anal region and the skin inside are very soft and delicate. If using turmeric, be sure it is fresh and soft. If turmeric is not available, the hands should be thoroughly washed before and after the practice.

People suffering from haemorrhoids or piles should be very careful when inserting either the turmeric stem or the finger. When washing the finger or the anus during the practice, always be careful to use only cold water. Blood vessels contract on contact with cold water

and dilate with hot water, increasing the blood flow. Using hot water will therefore exacerbate the swelling associated with piles.

Frequency and time of practice: People suffering from constipation should do this practice first thing in the morning. Those who have regular bowel motions can practise moola shodhana after their morning ablutions. Morning is the ideal time for the practice. In order to rid the body of problems like piles, this practice should be done for at least a month.

Benefits: This practice is as useful as it is simple. The blood flow and the flow of energy through the nadis are increased, enabling the excretory system to function efficiently, and removing disorders, especially of the anus and rectum. Hardened faeces are expelled. Daily cleansing of the bowels with this technique changes a person's attitude towards life, as it provides relief from the misery of constipation. Once constipation is cured, many other diseases subside. All the systems of the body are affected by blockages in the rectum, so keeping this passage clean with the practice of moola shodhana improves the health in many ways.

The main physical purpose of practising moola shodhana is to relieve constipation. In constipation, the faeces may become as hard as stone, and the exertion needed to pass the stool causes pain and often damages the lining of the rectum and anus. Such straining can also cause haemorrhoids (piles). Moola shodhana is an effective way of bringing relief. By applying ghee or turmeric juice inside the rectum, hardened faeces can be expelled with greater ease. The hardened kernels are to some extent broken up into smaller pieces as they are expelled and the rectum is lubricated, so injury to the anus is avoided.

Practice note: Moola shodhana should be adopted only when constipation has become severe and chronic and there is no other option. Practices such as laghoo

shankhaprakshalana which help prevent this condition should also be regularly employed. In shankhaprakshalana the faeces are excreted after having been softened with water. Moola shodhana is the final practice of dhauti.

The practices of basti can also be practised to facilitate complete cleansing of the large intestine.

Basti

Verse 45

जल वस्तिः शुष्कवस्तिर्वस्ती च द्विविधौ स्मृतौ ।
जल वस्तिं जले कुर्याच्छुष्कवस्तिं सदा क्षितौ ॥ 45 ॥

Jala vastih shushkavastirvastees cha dvividhau smritau;
Jala vastim jale kuryaachchushkavastim sadaa kshitau.

The practice of basti is of two types: jala basti and dry (sthala) basti. Jala basti is done in water. Dry basti is done on land, in a dry place.

Basti is the second of the six shatkarmas. In this practice, air or water is sucked in through the anus in order to clean the large intestine. Basti is a simple practice for washing and purifying the intestines. It is like a type of enema.

Although a person's body may seem to be healthy and free from disease, often there may be chronic problems related to the large intestine, for example, constipation, haemorrhoids and fissures in the anal region, all of which lead to difficulty and pain particularly during excretion.

Causes of ill health

Sometimes disease manifests in the body despite regular yoga practice. There are two possible reasons. The first is that even though one is doing yogic practices, there is still no

awareness of the body so the internal changes which result in disease are not able to be understood. The second reason is that sometimes an internal organ is already weak or diseased; it is possible that after one or two years of yogic practice this weakness may declare itself, as a process of cleansing begins. One should not feel scared or be afraid if this happens.

Yoga accepts that even yogis fall sick. It is seen in the lives of many accomplished sadhakas that even after attaining a higher state, it is disease that takes their bodies. For example, Ramakrishna Paramahansa had throat cancer. It is known that other yogis had paralysis, cardiac arrest and brain haemorrhage.

There is a tendency to think that people who have done yogic practices for many years, who have purified their bodies and achieved something in life by reaching a special state should be able to control physical disease. There are also examples of yogis being able to rid themselves of bodily diseases, whether by yogic practices or by making use of their siddhis. But if the diseases that manifest in their bodies are due to the karmas of others, which they have taken upon themselves in an effort to exhaust them, making use of their accomplishments or siddhis would defeat the purpose.

This point has been clearly explained in yogic texts. If siddhis are used in an attempt to exhaust one's karmas, ultimately the karmas will further increase; they will not be exhausted because it is not a natural process. It is similar to taking medicine in an attempt to get rid of a disease, but the medicine only suppresses the symptoms for some time. As long as the medicine is effective the disease is not experienced, but as its effect gradually reduces or ends, the disease re-emerges with increased force, as in asthma, diabetes, fever and many other conditions.

There is a difference between the suppression of disease and the eradication of disease in a natural way. Keeping this in mind, Sage Gheranda says that if any organ in the body suffers from a disease, it should not be taken to mean that there is any shortcoming in one's practice. It is a natural

process of life. At such times courage and awareness need to be developed. It indicates that it is time to practise self-analysis or introspection so that the cause of the disease may be understood.

The cause of disease is not always *bhoga*, indulgence in enjoyments, but karma. If disease manifests due to karma, the reason why it is manifesting may not be known, but if awareness and self-analysis are practised during the illness, something can be learnt about why the disease has manifested. For example, it may be due to attachment to pleasure, to some form of self-indulgence, or because a specific change in lifestyle or attitudes needs to be made.

Why basti?

Given that the practices of dhauti, including shankha-prakshalana, have already been given as a means of purifying the whole body, it may be asked what is the need for basti? If there is constipation, shankhaprakshalana can be performed and the digestive tract will be cleaned properly from top to bottom. However, shankhaprakshalana should only be practised once every six months, whereas basti may be undertaken regularly to remove constipation and clear the bowels while the problem persists.

I. JALA BASTI (water basti)

Verses 46–47

नाभिमग्नजले पायुन्यस्तनालोत्कटासनः ।
आकुञ्चनं प्रसारं च जल वस्तिं समाचरेत् ॥ 46 ॥
प्रमेहं च उदावर्तं क्रूरवायुं निवारयेत् ।
भवेत्स्वच्छन्ददेहश्च कामदेवसमो भवेत् ॥ 47 ॥

*Naabhimagnajale paayunyastanaalotkataasanah;
Aakunchanam prasaaram cha jala vastim samaacharet. (46)*

*Prameham cha udaavartam krooravaayum nivaarayet;
Bhavetsvachchhandadehashcha kaamadegasamo bhavet. (47)*

Sitting in water up to the navel, adopt utkatasana, then contract and expand the anal region. This is jala basti. This practice removes wind disorders, urinary and digestive problems, and makes the body beautiful like that of Kamadeva, the god of love.

Again this practice is very beneficial, and it is not difficult. When Sage Gheranda was teaching a few centuries ago, there were many sources of pure water in rivers and streams and this practice was performed in a natural and uplifting setting. The problem is that today a suitable environment for the practice cannot be found and so the modern alternative of health salons and the essentially passive use of enemas have been developed as a substitute.

Many people unknowingly resort to a variation of jala basti. They take an enema by inserting the spout of a tube into the anus and keeping the water level high in the tube so that the pressure of the water is felt inside. When the spout is removed, both water and waste matter come out. The only difference is that in jala basti one is not inserting a spout, but rather developing muscular control to bring water into the body. There is also the invigorating and rejuvenating effect of running water in the more natural basti technique.

In one sense jala basti is just a practice of *ashwini mudra*, contraction and expansion of the anus, but it is synchronized with the breath while standing in deep water up to the navel. Pure water has many natural therapeutic qualities. Flowing water like that of a pure river is best, because the waste product which comes out during the practice is immediately washed away by the flowing water. Do not do this practice in a tank or tub or in a polluted river. The pressure exerted by flowing water also influences the practice. In ayurveda, as well as in yoga, water is used in abundance for purifying and curing the body.

Technique

For optimal practice one should stand in deep, fresh flowing water up to the navel and adopt utkatasana. Utkatasana is very simple: standing upright, separate the feet a little, bend the knees, bend forward and place the hands on the thighs.

As utkatasana is a half standing and half squatting position, the anus can be more easily and fully contracted and expanded in coordination with the breath. Jala basti should be practised without stress and undue force should never be applied, although the sphincter muscles should fully open the anus.

During the course of this practice the sphincter muscles are carefully expanded to their maximum to encourage the inward flow of water. Through jala basti waste material sticking to the walls of the rectum (the final, almost straight, portion of the large intestine) is first expelled.

It is likely that very little water will go inside the first time it is practised. But as control over the muscles increases, with greater contraction and expansion taking place, more water will enter the body and then come out, making a rumbling sound. When the water is expelled, it brings with it dried, hardened waste that has collected inside, thus cleansing the large intestine.

Breathing: Do not move the abdomen with the breath; only the anus is contracted and expanded. On inhalation the anus is pulled inside and on exhalation the anus is totally relaxed – contraction and expansion. *Akunchan* means to close, to pull, and *prasar* means to expand, so we have *aakunchanam prasaaram cha jala vastim samaacharet*.

Frequency: Jala basti should only be practised when necessary. If one is suffering from constipation, it can be practised every few days until the problem is solved. When doing the practice, if there is sufficient time, continue until clean water (rather than waste product) starts coming out.

Precautions: Do not get into the habit of doing jala basti daily. There should be some waste product in the large intestines as certain bacteria are required for maintaining the general health of the body. Excessive practice of basti interferes with the growth of bacteria and harms the muscles of the anus and large intestines. People suffering from haemorrhoids should practise jala basti with care. Cold water should be used as it will cause constriction of the blood vessels (which are dilated in haemorrhoids) and lead to immediate relief. Many ailments of the anus benefit from basti.

Benefits: Disorders like *prameha*, intestinal problems, haemorrhoids and unhealthy wind, here termed *kroora vayu*, are removed and the physical body is purified. A light and radiant body like that of *Kamadeva*, the god of love, or Cupid, is attained. When toxic waste is removed from the body, the healthy state the body experiences is compared to that of *Kamadeva*. Good health definitely increases the glow and lustre of the body.

Many nadis in the body terminate near the anus. When sensations take place in those nadis, the entire nervous system is activated, and increased sensitivity and energy are experienced.

Yogis have experienced a drop in body temperature when water is sucked into the anus, as the body's internal

heat is reduced. This practice reduces boils, which often form due to excessive internal heat. Some skin diseases, like those forms of 'dry' dermatitis in which the skin cracks, and blood and pus flow, are cured. Note that this does not include 'wet' skin conditions in which there is oozing of watery fluid.

Udavrata is upward moving wind. Often when the bowels are full of wind, it cannot be expelled despite considerable effort. This wind causes pressure on the right side of the abdomen, especially in the lower part where the appendix is located, causing pain in that area. This disorder is very common in small children, and when the abdomen is massaged, the wind is expelled with a rumbling sound through the anus or by belching from the mouth. This wind can also be removed through the practice of jala basti.

2. STHALA BASTI (dry basti)

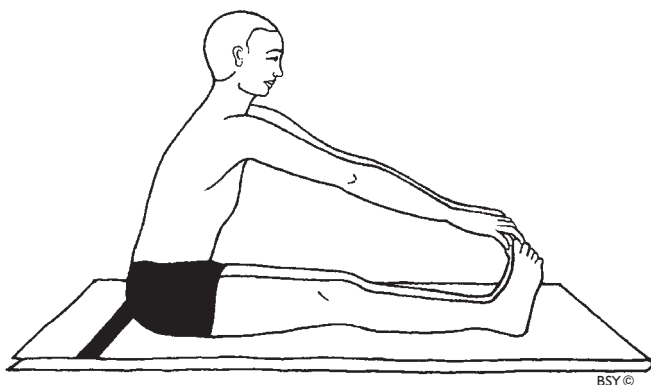
Verses 48–49

पश्चिमोत्तानतो वस्तिं चालयित्वा शनैः शनैः ।
अश्विनीमुद्रया पायुमाकुञ्चयेत्प्रसारयेत् ॥ 48 ॥
एवमभ्यासयोगेन कोष्ठदोषो न विद्यते ।
विवर्द्धयेज्जठराग्निमामवातं विनाशयेत् ॥ 49 ॥

*Paschimottaanato vastim chaalayitvaa shanaih shanaih;
Ashvineemudrayaa paayumaakunchayetprasaarayet. (48)*

*Evamabhyaasayogena koshthadosho na vidyate;
Vivarddhayejjatharaagnimaamavaatam vinaashayet. (49)*

Sitting in paschimottanasana, practise basti in the lower portion, contracting and expanding the anus by means of ashwini mudra. It removes diseases of the stomach and bowels and enhances the digestive fire.



Technique

For the practice of sthala basti, the anus is contracted and expanded by practising ashwini mudra while sitting on the ground.

Paschimottanato vastim chaalayitvaa shanaih shanaih, the asana mentioned here is paschimottanasana, but it is adjusted slightly to utthanpadasana, which can be called simple paschimottanasana.

Normally paschimottanasana is practised by sitting with the legs together and outstretched, then stretching forward from the hips and trying to touch the head to the knees while leaning the body forward as far as possible without straining. Utthanpadasana is much simpler; one separates the feet about 30 cm and leans forward just enough to clasp the toes. The spine is kept straight. It is not necessary to lean forward too much and even then the arms are kept straight, drawing the buttocks up a little. In this position ashwini mudra, contraction and expansion of the anus, is performed, to suck air inside the body.

Breathing: While inhaling, the anus is pulled in and up, and the sphincter muscles are contracted. On exhalation the anus is expanded. During inhalation expand the chest and consciously pull the diaphragm upwards. Relax it on exhalation. This also helps pull air into the rectum.

Optional preparatory practice: In hatha yoga texts it is also mentioned that if there is initial difficulty in sucking in air, a rubber tube 3 to 6 cm long and 1 to 1½ cm in diameter can be used. Ghee is applied to the tube and it is gently inserted inside the anus. The anal muscles are expanded with the help of the fingers, so that the rubber tube can be inserted easily and the possibility of injury is ruled out. There should be no tension. The anal muscles should be allowed to expand in a natural way. The tube is not to be inserted too deeply in case it is sucked in completely. Leave one end outside the body. Do not practise ashwini mudra, instead focus on the breath.

During inhalation, as the chest expands the abdominal muscles are pulled in and up. This creates a negative pressure, a type of vacuum, inside the abdomen. When this negative pressure is created, air is sucked upwards automatically via the tube. During exhalation, push the diaphragm down, without straining, so that pressure is created within the abdomen and air is expelled through the tube.

Once experience has been gained with the help of the tube, the practitioner will have a feeling for which type of pressure is to be created inside and with which type of pressure the air is to be expelled. Once the practice has been learned, stop using the tube.

Precautions: Do not practise ashwini mudra when using a tube. Ashwini mudra is not performed in the preparatory practice in order to avoid the possibility of the tube being sucked inside.

In *Gheranda Samhita*, the full practice of sthala basti is done with ashwini mudra.

In *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (2:26), the instructions combine jala and sthala techniques: “Sitting in utkatasana, navel-deep in water, insert a tube into the anus and contract the anus. This cleansing with water is called basti karma.” Just this one verse is given to describe the complex technique described above. An experienced

guide knows the full practice, which preparatory stage should be adopted, etc., according to the environment, skills and needs of the practitioner. Shatkarmas should not be attempted without such expert guidance.

Contra-indications: Although it is very easy to describe, the practice must only be undertaken under the guidance of a competent and qualified teacher. Basti is not suitable for everyone. It is contraindicated for high blood pressure, hernia and any serious disorder related to digestion, such as inflammatory bowel disease or bowel cancer. Basti is beneficial for some common diseases, including constipation, diarrhoea and irritable bowel syndrome. Anyone suffering from diseases of the abdomen should seek guidance from an expert.

Frequency and time of practice: Sthala basti should be undertaken only when required. If one is suffering from constipation, once a week is sufficient for general cleansing. Basti should not become a daily habit. Excessive practice of basti limits bacterial growth, irritates the lining of the large intestine and may harm the muscles of the anus.

Both jala and sthala basti can be practised at any time, but ideally in the morning before breakfast. The *Hatharatnavali* says food should not be eaten for three ghatis, about one and a quarter hours, after the practice of basti.

If planning to fast to purify the body, practising basti before starting the fast will enable maximum purification.

Benefits: Basti is the best technique for cleansing the large intestine. *Evamabhyasayogena koshthadosho na vidyate*, by this practice constipation is prevented in a yogi's body. Disorders of the stomach and intestines do not occur. *Vivarddhayejjatharaagnimaamavaatam vinaashayet*, diseases which manifest due to lack of digestive fire, like flatulence, indigestion, constipation, and pitta and kapha imbalances, are eradicated.

Basti enhances the energy and helps develop control over the abdominal muscles. To suck up water or air requires muscular control. There is a clear improvement in the health and capacity of the abdominal organs with this practice alone. Blood circulation takes place efficiently so that the exchange of oxygen and waste is optimized, and the blood is purified. The internal organs are massaged, making the nadis healthy.

Neti

Neti kriya is the third purification practice under shatkarma. There are many variations of neti in hatha yoga. In *Gheranda Samhita*, only one of these techniques, *sutra neti*, is given, in which a thread or *sutra* is taken through the nostrils. The main purpose of neti kriya is cleansing the head region and sensitizing the internal nadis. It is believed that the nadis related to sight and the inner parts of the nose are purified through the practice of neti.

After performing *sutra neti*, *jala neti*, neti with water, is performed to finish the cleansing process. Jala neti performed by itself is the most commonly used practice of neti. Milk, ghee, oil and urine can also be used.

When air is inhaled through the mouth, the air is not properly purified. Bacteria and other impurities can enter the lungs and weaken the body. Even if the nose is not blocked, cleansing the nostrils by practising neti regularly keeps the nasal passages working at optimum efficiency and helps to keep the whole body healthy.

As performing jala neti is part of the full practice of *sutra neti*, and it is such a beneficial practice in its own right, jala neti will be explained first before studying Sage Gheranda's instructions on *sutra neti*.

JALA NETI (nasal cleansing with water)



Technique

A special pot with a spout can be used for the practice. Its spout is specially made so that the nozzle on the end of the spout fits comfortably into the nostril and the water does not leak out.

Jala neti can be done in a standing position with the shoulders and head leaning forward or, if comfortable, sit in a squatting position.

Washing the nostrils: The neti pot is filled with pure, lukewarm water, and a little salt is added to make the water slightly salty. Ensure that all the salt is dissolved. There is a specific reason for using salty water instead of plain water. Salty water has greater osmotic pressure than plain water, which means that salt water cannot enter the delicate blood capillaries or the cells lining the nasal passages as easily as plain water does. If this practice is done with ordinary water, it is possible that pain in the nose may be felt as the water disrupts the delicate cells within the nostrils. There is no great harm in using plain water, but it is better to do the practice with salty water. Hold the bottom of the pot in one hand, as shown in the illustration, and gently insert the nozzle of the spout into the entrance of one nostril. The nozzle should fit firmly

and comfortably, so that water does not leak out. Tilting the head to one side, open the mouth and let the water flow through the nostril at its own pressure. Keep the mouth open during the practice and breathe through the mouth. The water should flow in one nostril and out the other.

It does not matter if a little water flows into the mouth. If the correct technique is followed, however, this will not happen. Let the water flow through the nasal passage for 10 to 20 seconds. Now take the spout out, close the nostril and blow out through the other nostril, so that all the water is expelled. Do not blow out with excessive force, otherwise the nasal passage may be injured and bleed. After this, blow out through the other nostril. Now do neti kriya on the opposite side for 10 to 20 seconds.

Drying the nostrils: After completing this practice it is very important to dry the nostrils and remove all the water from inside the nasal passage. Stand with the feet apart, the weight evenly distributed and lean forward so that the trunk is parallel to the ground. Close one nostril by pressing the side of the nose with the thumb and breathe forcefully enough to hear the breath through the other nostril about 15 times. The breath is quite rapid and the exhalation emphasized so that all the water is expelled. Repeat the practice with the other nostril, then with both nostrils. This simple practice should remove leftover water from the nostrils. If moisture still remains inside, repeat the above practice once or twice, until all the water has been expelled.

Frequency: Jala neti may be practised daily or as required. The ideal time is first thing in the morning before asana and pranayama. It can also be performed at other times if necessary, and more than once a day if there is a nasal ailment.

Precautions: People suffering from chronic nasal bleeding should not do neti kriya without the guidance of an expert. While pouring water in the nostrils, ensure that

the water is not too hot. While drying the nostrils, do not blow out through the nose with excessive force. Before commencing the practice it is important to ensure that the salt is properly dissolved.

If there is persistent difficulty in passing water through the nostrils, there may be some obstruction within the nose. In such cases, an expert should be consulted. Do not worry if initially there is a little irritation while passing water through the nostrils. Any irritation will cease as the nose becomes accustomed to contact with water.

Benefits: When lukewarm water passes through the nostrils, its influence is first felt by the tissue lining the nasal passages and sinuses. Glands within this tissue produce mucus which traps germs and other particles. This mucus membrane also regulates the air temperature inside the nose before it passes to the lungs. The nose acts like a strainer or filter. If the nose becomes stuffy, it is not possible to breathe properly because the pores of the strainer are blocked and hence the air-conditioning effect of the nose is lost.

Sinuses

Air passing through the nose also travels into the sinuses. Sinuses are cavities filled with air and mucus within the head and cheekbones that drain into the nasal cavity. Sinuses are situated around the area of the eyebrow centre and there are many subtle nadis in this region connected to the sinuses. Some nadis are related to the eyes and some to the ears, while others go inside the brain.

Most people are generally not concerned about the breathing process which continues uninterrupted and unknowingly throughout one's life. Even when one is sleeping at night, breathing continues. A person only becomes aware of the role that the nose plays in breathing when mucus increases in the region of the eyebrow centre, or when there is congestion in the sinuses due to disorders

like sinusitis; the person then realizes that they have a nose which needs to be cared for.

Suppose one is in an area near a coal mine, where coal dust abounds; when the nose is blown in such an environment, black mucus will be expelled. Coal particles are also found in the lungs of workers employed in coal mines, and they are prone to respiratory disorders. Not all the impurities can be expelled simply by blowing the nose. Dry and sticky particles will remain, which is why the practice of neti is essential in such circumstances.

Eyes and ears

During summer the mucus inside the nose becomes dry. Irritation is then felt due to the hot air. Often when the nose is blocked, there is also a feeling of heaviness in the eyes. The ears might also feel somewhat blocked and there is a feeling of heaviness in the brain. Generally, when the mucus becomes dry, it can be blown out. Dust particles caught in the mucus are also expelled. In a very dirty, polluted and impure environment, such as heavy traffic, heaviness in the head or headache may be felt and the eyes may become red and start watering. Even afterwards, with only a little reading the eyes become irritated and painful. Heaviness in the eyes, ears and head is not only linked with external heat and atmospheric conditions, but also with the warmth and purity of the inhaled air due to the filtering effect of the nose. If neti is performed in such stressful conditions, there will be immediate relief.

During neti, when water enters one nostril and flows out of the other, three processes take place simultaneously:

1. With the flow of water, waste products or mucus come out through the other nostril, mixed with the water. When neti is practised at the time one has a cold, first mucus comes out with drops of water. The mucus is gradually loosened and comes out slowly. The mucus membrane through which air enters is cleaned in this way.
2. The eyes may water with this practice. These tears do not cause any discomfort or burning sensation. With the

practice of neti, stimulation of the nerves around the eyes occurs and as a result the eyes start watering. Disorders of the ears are also helped as there is commonality between the nerves supplying the ears and the area behind the nostrils where the water flows.

3. When water enters and passes through the nostrils and eyebrow centre region, mild sensations are created in all the nadis of that area. If there is any disorder pertaining to the eyes or ears, the practice of neti is helpful.

Subtle healing

Neti kriya is the scriptural name, but the modern scientific name is ENT care, a practice for the ears, nose and throat. Neti cleanses and clears the throat, activating and influencing the vocal cords and other related nadis. For the common cold there is no other remedy as simple and ideal as neti, which enables the bacteria within the mucus inside the nose to be expelled.

Jala neti is the best practice for cleansing the eyes and sustaining vision, as it has a positive influence on all the organs and muscles connected with the eyes. The blood flow in the capillaries supplying the eyes is increased and as a result the eyes receive more blood, which helps to remove metabolic waste (such as carbon dioxide) from the eye region. It has been found that eye disorders may be rectified with this practice, particularly if the defects are in their initial stages.

In addition, people have individual experiences. Some may find their headaches go away; others will note their speech develops clarity. Neti has remarkable effects on allergies. Medical science has acknowledged multiple triggers of allergy: smoke, dust, certain fibres, pollen, animal hair and others. Allergy is one of the causes of respiratory disease, including asthma. With the practice of neti these diseases can be cured without any other remedy being needed. Insomnia and tiredness can also be resolved with this practice.

Neti influences the subtle nadis and nerves of the nose, which are connected to the nadis of the eyes and ears.

It allows the lungs to receive air that has been cleansed efficiently by the nostrils, which helps the whole body to remain healthy. With the practice of neti, the brain becomes calm and quiet. As a result, stress and lethargy are removed. Neti is also beneficial when the brain is excited or agitated, or in cases of epilepsy.

These are the benefits of neti in daily life. There is also the yogi's aim of *divya drishti*, divine vision, and the associated benefits of awakening ajna chakra, which have not yet been discussed.

SUTRA NETI (nasal cleansing with thread)

Verses 50–51

वितस्तिमानं सूक्ष्मसूत्रं नासानाले प्रवेशयेत् ।
मुखाग्निर्गमयेत्पश्चात् प्रोच्यते नेतिकर्मकम् ॥ 50 ॥
साधनान्नेतिकार्यस्य खेचरीसिद्धिमाप्नुयात् ।
कफदोषा विनश्यन्ति दिव्यदृष्टिः प्रजायते ॥ 51 ॥

*Vitastimaanam sookshmasootram naasaanaale praveshayet;
Mukhaannirgamayetpashchaat prochyate netikarmakam. (50)*

*Saadhanaannetikaaryasya khecharesiddhimaapnuyaat;
Kaphadoshaa vinashyanti divyadrishatih prajaayate. (51)*

Take a thread half as long as the arm, insert it in the nose and take it out through the mouth. This is called neti karma. Its practice enables one to attain perfection in khechari, elimination of kapha and attainment of divine vision.

Doctors may advise surgery for a deviated nasal septum or other abnormalities of the nasal bones, or in chronic sinusitis. Sometimes, however, chronic sinusitis can recur, necessitating further surgery, whereas the yogic practice of sutra neti is available for the long term management of many

respiratory problems without surgery. With the practice of sutra neti, obstructions in the nostrils are removed, which facilitates the flow of prana vayu. It is the practice of sutra neti, along with its physical and spiritual benefits, that has been explained by Sage Gheranda in this verse.

Preparation

Two types of materials may be used as a sutra. Nowadays, a long, thin rubber tube, called a catheter is available from pharmacies or medical suppliers in different sizes, and can be purchased according to individual requirements. Catheters of sizes 4, 5 and 6 are generally suitable. These numbers are according to the French system of sizing, which is commonly used. For example, size 5 has a 0.7 mm inner diameter and a 1.7 mm outer diameter. The catheter should be lubricated with ghee or saliva.

Traditionally, a sutra was prepared from seven or eight fine cotton threads of about 36–40 cm in length. The ends of the threads are trimmed and twisted together as if making a rope. The diameter of the thread is about 4 mm or according to the size of the nostrils. The first 3 cm or so of the sutra is immersed in melted beeswax and allowed to harden. The strands of the other end are then twisted and also soaked in beeswax. Beeswax is used so that the end of the sutra remains hard and can be inserted in the nostril, and also it can exit through the mouth without curling up.

Technique

The best asana for sutra neti is a squatting position, but the practice can also be done while standing.

Stage I: Use either a catheter or sutra. Insert the narrow end of the catheter or the waxed end of the sutra gently and slowly into the right nostril. While inserting the sutra, rotate it slowly so that it advances easily. Keep the tip pointing downwards. Do not push the sutra straight up.

Remember that the nasal cavity is behind the nose, not above it. Do not try to forcibly push the sutra or catheter inside in one go.

When the sutra enters the head through the nose, it travels down towards the throat and can be drawn out of the mouth with the fingers. Take hold of one end of the sutra with the index finger and thumb, or the middle and index fingers, and the other end with the other hand, and



carefully pull it backwards and forwards a few times. At first there may be some difficulty because it takes time for the nadis, nerves and mucus membranes to become strong. The practice must be developed gradually. The sutra should be pulled back and forth a maximum of 14 times. Stop the practice if there is any pain in the nose or mouth. Slowly remove the sutra from the nostril.

Repeat the process with the opposite nostril. After the practice wash the sutra with clean water and dry it.

Stage 2: It is essential to do jala neti after sutra neti. Jala neti expels all the impurities scoured free by sutra neti and collected inside the nasal passage. After practising sutra neti there will be a feeling of dryness in the nostrils. It is therefore a good idea to do neti with either milk or ghee after this to moisten the nostrils. Only a very small amount of milk or ghee should be used.

If the nose is stuffy or one of the nostrils is blocked, jala neti can be performed before sutra neti as well as afterwards.

Breathing: Breathe in a relaxed manner throughout the practice.

Frequency and time of practice: Sutra neti can be performed once a week, not daily. The ideal time for this practice is in the morning before breakfast.

Precautions: The nose is a very soft and delicate organ. Pass the sutra very slowly and carefully through the nostril. If it does not pass easily through the nostril, do not use force. It is important to seek advice from an experienced yoga teacher. Ensure that the sutra is clean before inserting it in the nostril.

Contra-indications: People who suffer from chronic nose bleeding or other serious nasal problems should not do this practice without seeking expert advice.

Benefits: Sutra neti massages and strengthens the mucus membranes, enhancing their efficiency. The blood flow to the nose is increased and the blood supply to the nostrils is optimized. The moving sutra exerts pressure on the glandular lining of the nostrils, reducing swelling and inflammation. Any abnormal growth of polyps is reduced. This practice also relieves sinusitis and rhinitis.

Additional neti practices

In yoga there is another neti practice for nasal problems. The midstream of the first urination for the day (excluding the first and last the parts of the flow) is collected in a pot and one or two drops are added to pure water. Neti is then performed with this solution. Urine is acidic and is a very good anti-infection agent. Uric acid destroys germs, thus helping to eradicate many disorders. Some people use their own undiluted urine in neti for therapeutic purposes. This has a subtle drying effect on delicate tissue, so if neti is done with undiluted urine it should be followed with plain water neti after five or ten minutes.

Hatha yoga practitioners also use other liquids to perfect neti, including warm milk, *dugdha*, or ghee, *ghrita*. First the nostrils are washed with jala neti, then neti is performed using milk or ghee or any other natural edible oil. The

practice is done by sniffing the fluid into the nose from a glass or bowl. Groundnut oil or olive oil can also be used. Mustard oil gives a burning sensation, but some people use it. Sesame oil is also used. Neti kriya includes all these practices.

Psychic benefits

With regard to the spiritual benefits of neti kriya, it is said that the practice awakens ajna chakra. With the awakening of ajna chakra the mind becomes calm, there is the experience of one-pointedness and the attainment of concentration. One can understand one's actions properly and gain insight.

In this verse, Sage Gheranda has described three benefits of neti kriya. The first is the rectification of kapha disorders. The second is the removal of defects of vision and the attainment of divine vision. The third is that perfection of khechari mudra is attained. Here, 'perfection of khechari mudra' is a state of attainment. After perfecting khechari mudra, a yogi achieves complete control over the body and can perceive defects of the body. It helps in attaining the siddhi of astral travelling. Many other siddhis are attained as well.

Lauliki (Nauli)

Verse 52

अमन्दवेगेन तुन्दं भ्रामयेदुभपाश्वर्ययोः ।
सर्वरोगान्निहन्तीह देहानलविवर्द्धनम् ॥ 52 ॥

*Amandavegena tundam bhraamayadubhapaarshvayoh;
Sarvarogaannihanteeha dehaanalavivarddhanam.*

The abdomen should be rotated very swiftly from side to side. This lauliki (nauli) destroys all types of diseases and activates the digestive fire.

In this verse a fourth shatkarma practice, known as lauliki, is briefly described. The word *lauliki* is derived from the root *lola*, meaning to roll or agitate, and in this practice the abdomen is rotated and contracted so that all the abdominal organs as well as the muscles and ligaments are stimulated and activated. Another name for this practice is *nauli kriya*. The abdominal muscles are squeezed in and the muscles on first the left and then the right sides are strongly constricted. The practice increases the digestive fire. Lauliki is the best practice for massaging the internal organs. As a result it benefits the entire digestive system and overall health. It is difficult for beginners, but can be mastered with resolve and regular practice.

The first three shatkarmas (dhauti, basti and neti) purify and remove defects from the internal organs by using either

water or air or some solid object. The purpose of the next three shatkarma practices (lauliki, kapalbhati and trataka) is also purification of the body, but their process is different.

Dehaanalaavivarddhanam, nauli activates the digestive fire and, as previously discussed, so does the third practise of antar dhauti, vahnisara kriya, which is now more widely known as agnisara kriya. While nauli and agnisara appear similar, their benefits differ markedly. Agnisara kriya is a preliminary stage, whereas lauliki, or nauli kriya, is a stage of awakening and attainment.

Abdominal muscles

In nauli kriya there is a need for the coordinated use of various muscles of the body, including the feet, hands, back and abdomen. Of these, the abdominal muscles are the most important as they need to be contracted in a specific manner.

Two vertical muscles, the right and left rectus abdominii, are located in the front of the abdomen, extending from just below the ribcage down to the pubic bone. These muscles lie on the right and left sides of the midline and together form a strap which is broad at the rib cage end and narrower at the pelvic end. In addition to this muscle strap, three other sheets of overlapping muscle form the abdominal wall. These sheets overlap each other in a way that provides maximum strength. Together the muscles compress and support the abdominal organs. When the muscles contract, pressure inside the abdomen increases, massaging the abdominal organs and assisting digestion. When the muscular wall becomes weak, hernia (the protrusion of abdominal tissue through the muscular wall) can occur. Nauli activates all of these muscles.

Preparation

It is essential to perfect agnisara kriya and uddiyana bandha prior to nauli kriya, otherwise nauli kriya is extremely difficult to perform.

Precautions: If there is any pain in the abdomen during nauli, the practice should immediately be discontinued. When the pain subsides, try again or practise the next day. If pain increases or persists, seek the advice of a competent physician or yoga teacher.

For the variations of nauli, note that the practice is possible only when there is no air or food in the stomach, and the lungs have been emptied by a full exhalation.

Contra-indications: People who are recovering from major or abdominal surgery, or suffering from high blood pressure, hypertension, heart disease, hernia, gallstones or peptic ulcer should not practise nauli kriya. Those with abdominal complaints should consult a qualified specialist prior to practising nauli. Nauli kriya should not be practised during pregnancy. It can be practised five to six months after delivery to make the abdominal and pelvic muscles strong and healthy and to assist in the subtle realignment of internal organs.

Types of nauli

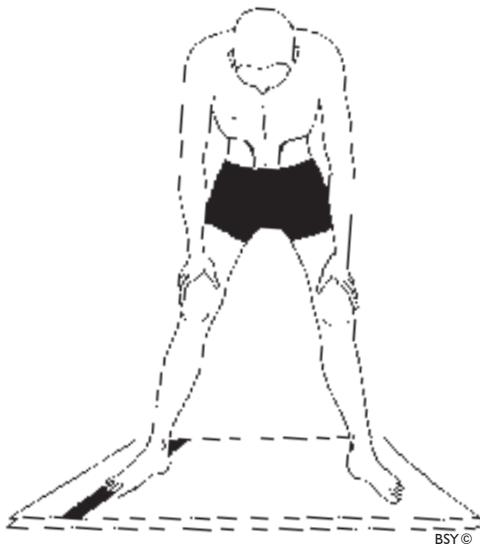
Nauli has four stages:

1. *Madhyama nauli*, in which both the rectus abdominii muscles overlying the stomach and intestines are contracted so that they form a prominent arch down the centre of the abdomen.
2. *Vama nauli*, in which the abdominal muscles on the left side of the abdominal wall are isolated and contracted.
3. *Dakshina nauli*, in which the abdominal muscles on the right side of the abdominal wall are isolated and contracted.

These three practices are done separately one after the other and complement each other. After practising agnisara and uddiyana bandha, and then perfecting madhyama nauli, vama and dakshina nauli become easier. When complete mastery is gained over all three stages, the fourth type of nauli should be undertaken.

4. *Bhramara nauli*, in which the abdominal muscles are progressively rotated and contracted. The three preceding practices are combined in this fourth variation called *bhramara nauli* or simply *nauli*. It has two parts: progressively contracting the muscles in a clockwise direction (circular rotation from right to left) and then doing the same in the opposite direction (circular rotation from left to right). Each rotation is completed 5 to 10 times, according to individual capacity.

I. MADHYAMA NAULI (central abdominal contraction)



Technique

Stand upright with the feet one metre apart. Exhale through the mouth while leaning forward and adopting *utkatasana*. Stand with the feet apart. Bend the knees slightly. Lean forward and place the hands on the thighs, so that the trunk is supported by the arms and hands. The fingers may point inward or outward. The arms should be straight throughout the practice.

Exhale deeply so that the lungs feel completely empty. To exhale fully, perform uddiyana bandha by contracting the abdominal muscles. While retaining the breath outside, with the head bent forward, suck in the lower abdomen towards the spine. Make an effort to bring all the abdominal muscles into the centre of the abdomen. Contract the abdominal muscles as much as possible, but avoid excessive strain. Continue contracting the muscles for as long as is comfortable.

Release the contraction, raise the head and return to the standing position. Relax and inhale deeply. This is one round.

2. VAMA NAULI (left isolation)

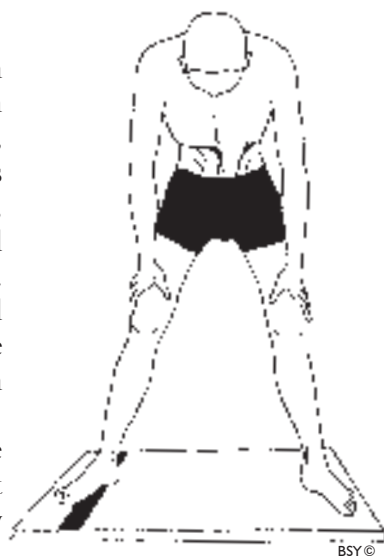
Do not attempt vama nauli until madhyama nauli has been mastered.

Technique

Adopt the standing position as described above. Perform madhyama nauli. Next, relax the abdominal muscles on the right. Simultaneously, contract the abdominal muscles on the left side. As a result, the abdominal muscles will naturally be pulled to the left, as shown in the diagram.

Isolated contraction of the muscles on the left is not easy for beginners. It is only possible through practice.

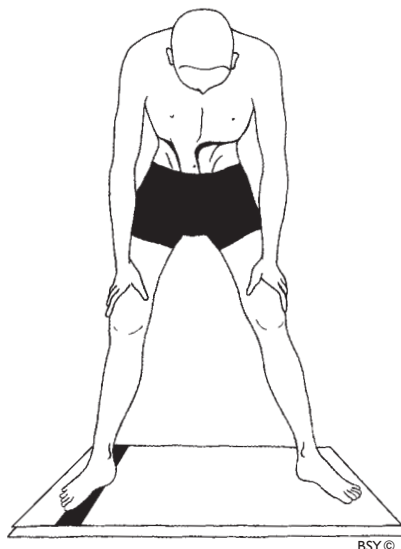
Vama nauli is made easier if the pressure of the right hand on the right thigh is released, and one bears down



on the left thigh with the left hand, leaning slightly forward and to the left.

After vama nauli, return to madhyama nauli. Relax the muscles and come into uddiyana bandha. Return to the upright position, breathe in and let the abdominal muscles expand. Inhale and allow the breath to flow naturally until the heartbeat and respiration return to normal. This is one round. Then proceed to dakshina nauli.

3. DAKSHINA NAULI (right isolation)



Technique

After completing vama nauli repeat the practice, except this time relax the abdominal muscles on the left side of the abdomen and contract the muscles on the right. Return to madhyama nauli. Do uddiyana bandha, release and relax in the upright position until the heartbeat returns to normal.

Vama nauli and dakshina nauli can then be repeated according to individual capacity and time available. Do not strain under any circumstances. Beginners should practise until they have enough control over the muscles to sequentially contract and relax them. This control is established by focusing the mind entirely on the muscle contraction.

4. BHRAMARA NAULI (abdominal rotation)

This practice should not be attempted until the other three stages have been perfected.

Technique

First practise madhyama nauli, applying uddiyana bandha with the breath retained outside. Then practise vama nauli, followed by dakshina nauli. Finally, practise madhyama nauli once again, then inhale. This is one complete rotation of the abdominal muscles. Thus, bhramara nauli is the process of sequential contraction of the abdominal muscles so that a rotation takes place. Gradually increase the number of rotations. Eventually one can rotate the abdominal muscles dynamically as many times as possible in a breath, but without excessive stress.

Stop rotating the abdominal muscles and relax them. Stand upright and breathe in. Relax until the heartbeat returns to normal. This is one round.

Again apply uddiyana bandha with external breath retention and rotate the abdominal muscles in the opposite direction: madhyama nauli, dakshina nauli, vama nauli, and finally perform madhyama nauli again. Do this practice briskly a number of times, with the breath retained outside. Relax the muscles, stand upright and breathe in. This completes the second round.

The speed of rotation is of minor importance. It is important that the rotation follows the correct sequence and is rhythmic.

Breathing: Breathe normally in the starting position. Prior to isolating and contracting the abdominal muscles, breathe out completely and apply uddiyana bandha. Hold the breath outside while contracting the abdominal muscles. Inhale slowly in a controlled manner while releasing the contraction and returning to the standing position. Breathe normally between rounds.

Duration and time of practice: For a beginner, five or six rounds of madhyama nauli are sufficient. Gradually the number of rounds can be increased to ten. Do not strain. Vama and dakshina nauli should be performed together, five to ten rounds each. Begin with five to ten rounds of bhamara nauli and slowly increase to 25 over a period of months as more control is gained over the muscles. Nauli kriya should be undertaken only on an empty stomach. The ideal time is in the morning before breakfast. Otherwise it can be done at least five or six hours after eating.

Benefits: In kundalini yoga and hatha yoga, the practice of nauli is undertaken to influence and awaken the chakras, psychic centres. In the physical body nerve plexuses (networks) can be observed at the places where the chakras are located. These nerve plexuses, corresponding to the chakras, have branches that extend throughout the body. The effect of nauli is felt on these nerve plexuses.

In this practice the muscles of the abdominal wall are contracted and brought to the midline where they form a central contour about ten centimetres long. When nauli is perfected, apart from this contour, the abdomen is so flat that the practitioner can literally count the bones of the vertebral column. In this state pressure is exerted on the stomach and intestines. All the organs of the abdomen and stomach are massaged.

The abdominal muscles become strong and healthy so that the risk of hernia (the protrusion of tissue through a weakness in the muscular wall) is lessened. Bowel function is improved and constipation reduced. The pancreas is energized and insulin is secreted, so nauli is especially beneficial in diabetes. The digestive fire is activated. The main pranic currents are brought into a specific position which is conducive to the awakening of manipura chakra. As such, nauli plays a significant role in awakening manipura chakra.

It is clear that nauli influences the physical, mental and pranic consciousness. Tissues throughout the body, such as muscles, blood vessels, endocrine glands and the nervous system, are subtly purified. Nauli rejuvenates the pranic energy within the whole body, which in turn enhances the efficiency of the brain.

In *Gheranda Samhita*, *saptanga yoga*, the seven limbs of yoga, are described. These seven limbs or states are: *shodhana*, purity, *dridhata*, firmness, *sthairya*, steadiness, *dhairya*, patience, *laghava*, lightness of body, *pratyaksha*, acquiring subtle perception, and *nirlipta*, non-involvement. The purpose of the shatkarmas is directly related to the first two of these states.

Purity of the body, *shodhana*, is the goal of the first three shatkarmas. Sage Gheranda gives a detailed description of this process. The practices purify the gross and subtle bodies and bring them into a controlled, harmonious and healthy state.

In the sequence of shatkarmas, nauli has been given fourth place. There is a reason for this. First the body is purified, ridding it of disorders. Internal toxins and waste products are removed, and internal defects or imbalanced doshas are rectified. After this purification, the requirement of the body is energy, which necessitates further practices. Of these, the first is nauli, the second is *trataka* and the third is *kapalbhati*, which are respectively the fourth, fifth and sixth shatkarmas. These three practices are undertaken only

after the body has been purified internally. With the practice of nauli kriya, the body is sensitized, strong vibrations are created in the pranic body and mental concentration is achieved, allowing the consciousness to move from one state to another very quickly.

The aim of the fourth, fifth and sixth shatkarmas is to provide energy which can be used to achieve dridhata, firmness. In this state, stimulation of the digestive fire occurs automatically, but it is important to realize that this state is not possible without mastering pranayama.

Advanced pranayama

Sage Patanjali describes four types of pranayama in the *Yoga Sutras*. Two involve internal breath retention and two involve external retention. Internal breath retention is easy and does not place much strain on the body. Most people can hold the breath inside for 20 or 25 seconds without strain. When air is inside the lungs, the exchange of oxygen and carbon dioxide between the air and the blood can continue for a short time.

External breath retention, however, is very difficult. When the breath is held out, the flow of blood to the heart is decreased (because pressure in the chest is high at the end of exhalation). Additionally, there is a lack of oxygen available to the blood in the lungs. These factors cause the heart rate to increase to try to pump an adequate amount of oxygen to the body. However, the fast heart rate uses up more oxygen and produces more waste carbon dioxide. Thus, after only a very short period there is a need to breathe in again.

Through the medium of pranayama both the nervous system and prana shakti can be balanced. Internal and external breath retention are practised to create different states. In hatha yoga and kundalini yoga, perfection of breath retention is associated with awakening of the chakras and kundalini.

In general, pranayama practice helps to resolve physical and mental disturbances. Respiratory problems end as the

art of correct breathing is mastered. As one becomes capable of controlling the breath, initially by simply observing it, many mental problems like anger, despondency and worry cease. When these types of effects are experienced in daily life, it is sometimes thought that managing physical and mental health is the only aim of pranayama, but the real purpose of pranayama is to awaken the pranas, chakras and kundalini.

In nauli kriya, perfection of pranayama, especially mastery of external breath retention, is essential. Nauli cannot be practised for a lengthy duration until external breath retention is mastered.

Trataka

Trataka is described as one of the cleansing or purification techniques of hatha yoga. Most people know the simple version of this technique, and believe that trataka means to gaze at something continuously. It is also believed that by practising trataka the eyes develop a magnetic quality by which anyone can be hypnotized and any type of siddhi can be achieved.

In yoga, however, the practice of trataka is not seen as a technique for achieving siddhis, but as a process of purification. First, an effort is made to purify the body by removing toxic elements then, in lauliki, or nauli kriya, the aim is to bring the subtle aspects of the physical body under control. Now, in the practice of trataka an effort is made to cleanse and calm the region of the brain. Organs from the feet to the neck are brought under control through the practice of nauli, and the portion above the neck, especially the brain region, is particularly influenced through the practice of trataka.

निमेषोन्मेषकं त्यक्त्वा सूक्ष्मलक्ष्यं निरीक्षयेत् ।
पतन्ति यावदश्रूणि त्रटकं प्रोच्यते बुधैः ॥ 53 ॥
एवमभ्यासयोगेन शाम्भवी जायते ध्रुवम् ।
नेत्ररोगा विनश्यन्ति दिव्यदृष्टिः प्रजायते ॥ 54 ॥

*Nimeshonmeshakam tyaktvaa sookshmalakshyam nireekshayet;
Patanti yaavadashrooni traatakam prochyate budhaih. (53)*

*Evamabhyasayogena shaambhavee jaayate dhruvam;
Netrarogaa vinashyanti divyadrishtih prajaayate. (54)*

Gazing at a subtle object without blinking the eyes, until tears begin to fall, is known as *trataka*. With constant practice of *trataka*, *shambhavi mudra* is achieved, defects of the eyes are removed and divine vision is attained.

Trataka means to gaze at a fixed point with steady vision. Theoretically, there are three elements in *trataka*. The first is the viewer seated in the place of practice. The second is the view of the object in front of the viewer. The third is the process of gazing. Once the attention has become steadily aware of these three elements, that is considered to be a state of internal awareness or one-pointed internal consciousness.

This practice is to be continued until tears start falling, *patanti yaavadashrooni*. *Ashrooni* means tears. *Traatakam prochyate budhaih*, *trataka* should be thus learnt and understood. This is a description of *trataka* in coded language.

Types of *trataka*

In yoga, three types of *trataka* are acknowledged. The first is *bahiranga trataka* or *bahir trataka*, external *trataka*. The second is *antar trataka* or *antaranga trataka*, inner or internal *trataka*. The third type of *trataka* is *adho trataka*, which is practised with the eyes half open and half closed.

For bahir trataka, an object or image which has a form is selected. Everything in the universe, the sun, moon, stars, trees, an idol or a photograph of the guru can be considered as symbols. One can practise bahir trataka making use of such an object, provided one's consciousness merges with it while gazing at it continuously.

Choose a symbol, bearing in mind that the symbol should not be changed. Otherwise the after-image reflected on the screen of the mind would become obsolete, and the practice would need to be started again from the beginning. Also, the full benefits of the practice would not be derived. If one selects a symbol and practises trataka on it daily, the after-image will start becoming clear. This will help later in the practice of antar trataka, and *chitta*, consciousness, will soon become steadily focused on that symbol.

Generally people are extroverted by nature, so for many people it is impossible to keep the eyes closed even for two minutes. Bahir trataka, external trataka, is very useful here. Through bahir trataka the eyes are trained to be fixed and steady at one spot, so that the *chitta vrittis*, the patterns or dispositions of the mind, are changed and can easily be converted into introversion.

For antar trataka the eyes are closed and the imaginative power of the mind is awakened. An image is fixed on the inner space of the mind, *chidakasha*, and then trataka is performed on it. For this, an inner or mental symbol can be chosen. A *yantra*, geometrical diagram, the sun or moon, one's own *ishta*, deity of choice, or the guru can be used as the symbol.

In the beginning, the practice of antaranga trataka is possible only after the practice of bahiranga trataka. With external trataka, the practice of concentrating *chitta* at one place is achieved and it helps an inner after-image to emerge. When the after-image appears clearly on the inner screen, *chitta* immediately becomes one-pointed, because thoughts other than the after-image are obliterated. Once this is achieved, antar trataka is a very effective practice to channel the energy on a definite path. Concentration and

the state of meditation are attained with this type of trataka. People who can easily perceive the image of their symbol mentally can do antar trataka without practising on an external object first.

For adho trataka, practise with the eyes half open and half closed. In trataka, different positions of the eyes have been studied and named. Open eyes are called *poornima drishti*, full vision. The full moon is also called poornima. Closed eyes are called *ama drishti*; *ama* relates to the word *amavasya*, and the no moon or dark moon is referred to as amavasya. Half open eyes are called *pratipada drishti*. Poornima drishti is used in external trataka, ama drishti in inner trataka and pratipada drishti is made use of in adho trataka. Nasikagra drishti, nasikagra mudra and shambhavi mudra are also considered to be practices of adho trataka.

Psychic power

In the practice of trataka, when there is awareness of the viewer, the view and the process of viewing, fears begin to be destroyed gradually, one by one. It has been noticed that when people start practising trataka after having performed yogic practices for a long period, then as one fear arises and ends, a second one arises and ends, then a third one arises and ends. This process continues. In hatha yoga it is believed that by merely practising trataka a person can become a master of all siddhis and can attain the state of self-realization, because the mind merges into the object. Trataka can therefore be considered as a practice of *laya yoga*, where the practitioner's consciousness dissolves into whatever is concentrated upon.

It is essential to choose an external form for bahir or external trataka. As stated earlier trataka can be practised on anything, whether it is a flame, one's own shadow or some other symbol. After practising trataka on the external object or symbol, one may enter into subtle or internal antar trataka. Once this is perfected, practices such as shambhavi mudra take on a different dimension.

Mental steadiness

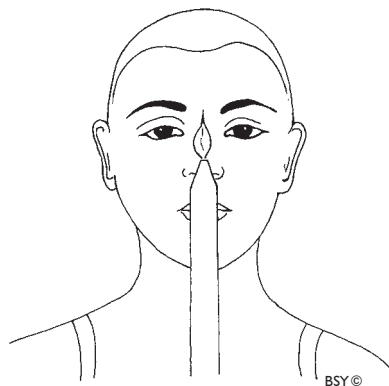
It must also be kept in mind that when this subtle *trataka* is practised, the symbol should remain still. When doing the practice, the symbol does not remain in one spot. There are physical and psychological reasons for this. First, the eyelids constantly flutter subtly; they are never steady. When the eyes are closed and one is trying to hold the inner gaze steady, fluttering eyelids disrupt the practice. The second reason for unsteadiness is psychological. If the mind is restless, if it is not one-pointed, then how can the after-image of the object be kept steady? If there is mental restlessness, the view does not remain stable for more than a few seconds. If *trataka* is practised when the mind is peaceful, the eyes will be steady. If *trataka* is practised immediately after activity, however, there will be inner excitement and the eyes will move more.

It has frequently been observed that prisoners who remain in a cell all day sometimes continually lie on their bed, looking only at the ceiling or a lighted bulb. This is a form of *trataka*, and they often hallucinate as they cannot tolerate or handle the experiences it brings up. An internal change takes place in which they feel their own identity is coming to an end. They are removed from the outside world and from external experiences. To lose one's self-identity is a person's biggest insecurity. Losing their fortune or having their house burn down will cause some suffering, but it will be much less than that caused by the loss of self-identity. This is a big blow, which destroys the entire mental structure.

In this way, one sometimes almost unconsciously adopts something and concentrates the gaze on it. In yoga, one should take care that the symbolic object is the correct one and practise only under guidance. Sage Gheranda speaks of a subtle object in his explanation. Today, a simple candle flame is often used.

In the yogic practice of *trataka* one meditates on a flame or some other symbolic object. It will be noticed that when

the eyes are focused on the flame, many thoughts spring up. Let them come. Keep on observing them as a witness. Just remember the aim or objective. Trying to suppress thoughts increases mental tension. So if the thoughts come, let them come. Keep the attitude of a witness and they will go of their own accord.



External and internal trataka on a flame

Sit in any meditative asana in which the body can be kept steady. Keep the back and neck in a straight line. Light a candle or lamp and place it on a stand at eye level, about an arm's length away from the eyes, so that the back and head can be kept straight when gazing at it.

Close the eyes and be aware of the whole body. Have the back and neck upright and well aligned. Let the whole body become like a statue. It is essential to be aware of the state of the body. Physical stability is important, as there should be no movement in the body to disturb the concentration. Now open the eyes and look at the brightest spot in the middle of the flame. Just gaze at the flame continuously, forgetting everything else. If the mind becomes unsteady, bring it back and focus on the flame again. Different colours will be observed in the candle flame. In the middle the flame is a blue colour. Keep looking at it continuously.

The main effort in *trataka* is to avoid twitching or blinking the eyelids. The eyes are kept open for as long as possible without creating any tension, from 30–40 seconds up to two to three minutes. Before the eyes develop a burning sensation and tears start flowing, close the eyes and keep them closed until the after-image of the flame can no longer be seen in *chidakasha*. If the after-image cannot be seen at first, do not worry; it will become clear with practice. Just have the thought of the after-image at the back of the mind.

If at any time a thought springs up, let it come. Keep on observing the thoughts as a witness. This is essential in the subtle practice of *trataka*. After each round the eyes are kept closed until their tiredness resolves and the after-image is no longer seen.

When the after-image becomes faint or disappears, and the eyes are relaxed, open the eyes and repeat the practice. When intending to finish, close the eyes and when the after-image has faded continue watching *chidakasha*, the dark space in front of the closed eyes. Whatever appears there, keep on watching it, but maintain awareness of *chidakasha*. Practise this for a few minutes. Then open the eyes and extinguish the candle.

Time of practice: The ideal time for this practice is early morning or at night.

Duration: It is said that if the object of concentration is physical in nature, such as a flame, *trataka* should not be practised for more than five minutes. The duration in fact depends on the individual, but it is essential to obtain directions from a very experienced guide if intending to practise for longer. Five minutes of practice is sufficient to remove some types of eye defects.

Precautions: Do not practise *trataka* on a flame that is not steady. People with visual problems should ensure that the symbol is positioned so that a double image is not seen, and should seek expert guidance if this is

not possible. Generally speaking, trataka should not be practised wearing spectacles.

Although the texts specifically mention tears, notice that the wording indicates practising till the threshold of this experience. The point of the practice is not to make tears roll down the face, but simply to practise as long as one can without this happening.

Contra-indications: People with glaucoma should not practise trataka. Epileptics should not practise trataka on a candle flame. Trataka should not be practised on the sun.

Benefits: Sage Gheranda says three things in this respect. First, *netrarogaa vinashyanti*, trataka removes defects of the eyes. This is its physical benefit. Second, *divyadrishtih prajaayate*, divine vision is created. This is its divine benefit. Third, *shaambhavee jaayate dhruvam*, the siddhi of shambhavi is achieved. This is its spiritual benefit.

Vision has a direct link with the state of consciousness. Conflicting thoughts lead to mental restlessness and instability. Trataka is the best way to manage this condition. By stabilizing the eyes during trataka the consciousness, chitta, can be made steady and free of tension. When the chitta becomes one-pointed, the pineal gland is energized and a higher state is achieved.

Trataka is a simple way to increase memory. It is very useful for people suffering from insomnia and nervous tension. Trataka builds self-confidence. It also influences the brainwaves, which change according to our physical, mental and emotional activities. The frequency of these waves slowly reduces with trataka. The mind becomes thoughtless and free from disorders and freedom from emotional ailments is attained. The practice increases awareness and calms all dimensions of inner activity, thus releasing energy

Trataka is considered to be the best practice for clearing and purifying the *antahkarana*, the inner tool of

consciousness. It is also believed that with the practice of trataka, when the antahkarana becomes fixed on an object or a symbol and merges with it, laya samadhi is attained. With the attainment of laya samadhi, many kinds of siddhis are attained. This was noted in the life of Sage Gorakhnath, who attained siddhis through the medium of trataka.

Divine benefits

It has been said, *divya drishtih prajayate*, divine vision is achieved. Divya drishti means *antar drishti*, inner vision. Symbolically, the inner eye is called the third eye, or the eye of Shiva. It is ajna chakra, where prana shakti and chitta shakti meet, become one, and in this sattwic, balanced state travel up to sahasrara to meet the supreme consciousness, Shiva.

From mooladhara to ajna chakra, ida and pingala nadis intersect at each chakra, but they become one on meeting at ajna chakra, which means that from ajna chakra the experience of monism begins: 'I' and 'That' are one. Up to ajna chakra the experience of duality continues: "I am experiencing this. I am seeing this. I can see the future. I can see the past. I am seeing the present. I can read the thoughts of others. There is the power of attraction in my glance," and so on. This type of experience and these feelings remain until the *pancha tattwas*, the five elements, are transcended.

The domain of the five elements is from mooladhara to vishuddhi, and when one rises above these, what can be called knowledge of a sixth sense is attained. In yogic language this sixth sense is antar drishti, inner vision, the establishment of the link or relationship with one's own ishta or guru. With the experience of inner contact and oneness, one becomes the knower of the past, present and future. This is also called divine vision.

The secret of shambhavi

In the verse it is said that it is essential to have mastery over trataka in order to perfect shambhavi mudra. Shambhavi

mudra is an apparently simple practice in which one looks at the eyebrow centre. A detailed description is given in Chapter 3. It should be understood that when shambhavi is perfected, *shambhavi siddhi*, control over the subtle elements, is achieved. This siddhi is illustrated by a story from the Puranas, the ancient scriptures.

Sati, the consort of Shiva, attended a *yajna*, a ceremonial fire sacrifice, in the kingdom of her father, Daksha. She noticed that Lord Shiva had not been invited and in response to this insult, she self-immolated, reducing her body to ashes. She is described as sitting in an asana and focusing her vision at the eyebrow centre. Keeping her ishta in the heart centre, she reduced her body to ashes by yogic fire.

Shaambhavee jaayate dhruvam, shambhavi siddhi is attained. Thus it has been described in both the ancient scriptures and modern yogic texts that with shambhavi siddhi yogis attain control over the subtle elements. When this is achieved, a person becomes omniscient and omnipotent.

Kapalbhati (Bhalbhati)

Verse 55

वातक्रमेण व्युत्क्रमेण शीत्क्रमेण विशेषतः ।
भालभातिं त्रिधा कुर्यात्कफदोषं निवारयेत् ॥ 55 ॥

*Vaatakramena vyutkramena sheetkramena visheshatah;
Bhaalabhaatim tridhaa kuryaatkaphadosham nivaarayet.*

Vatakrama, vyutkrama and sheetkrama are the three types of bhalbhati. Practising them eliminates phlegm and mucus from the body.

The shatkarmas described so far have aimed to cleanse or purify the organs of the body, and to achieve mental concentration and stability. Now the sixth shatkarma is explained for the purification of pranamaya kosha. Bhalbhati is now more commonly known as kapalbhati. *Kapala* means skull, *bhal* means forehead. The literal meaning of *bhati* is bellows.

Sage Gheranda has discussed three practices which are all variations of bhalbhati or kapalbhati. The first is *vatakrama*, which uses air. The second is *vyutkrama* and the third is *sheetkrama*, which both use water in a manner similar to jala neti.

I. VATAKRAMA KAPALBHATI (air cleansing)

Verses 56–57

इडया पूरयेद्वायुं रेचयेत्पिङ्गलया पुनः ।
पिङ्गलया पूरयित्वा पुनश्चन्द्रेण रेचयेत् ॥ 56॥
पूरकं रेचकं कृत्वा वेगेन न तु धारयेत् ।
एवमभ्यास योगेन कफ दोषं निवारयेत् ॥ 57॥

*Idayaa poorayedvaayum rechayetpingalayaa punah;
Pingalayaa poorayitvaa punashchandrena rechayet. (56)*

*Poorakam rechakam kritvaa vegena na tu dhaarayet;
Evamabhyaasa yogena kapha dosham nivaarayet. (57)*

The breath is to be inhaled through ida nadi (the left nostril) and exhaled through pingala nadi (the right nostril). Then the breath is inhaled through surya nadi (the right nostril) and exhaled through chandra nadi (the left nostril). Inhalation and exhalation should be fast; do not hold it. This technique removes kapha dosha.

Vatakrma kapalbhati is described with the cleansing practices, but it uses air to clean the nasal area, and is therefore also considered to be a type of pranayama. What is the practice of kapalbhati? After inhaling, air is to be expelled quickly, just as a blacksmith firing a furnace expels air from his bellows. On inhalation, air is allowed to enter the body passively, at a normal speed.

Some people consider that lengthening of the pranas is the aim of pranayama. Others take it to mean expansion in the context of awakening – awakening of prana. It is believed that when the breathing process is brought under control through the medium of pranayama, inhalation and exhalation, the two activities of breathing, are helpful in calming and purifying the brain. The final stage of stability of brain and body can only be achieved when obstructions are removed from different regions of the body and disorders

of the pranas are rebalanced. An unrestricted flow of prana then takes place, giving stability of annamaya kosha and pranamaya kosha.

Vatakrama kapalbhati is a difficult practice, because along with the forced exhalation, energy is focused through only one nostril at a time. Also, in this practice, awareness is taken to the forehead on exhalation, rather than to the abdomen as is usually the case in this type of pranayama.

There are several variations that should be mastered sequentially before attempting the practice as given by Sage Gheranda.

Sequential practice

In *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (2:35), only one technique of kapalbhati is described, and as it uses air it most closely resembles Sage Gheranda's vatakrama kapalbhati. However, the technique is slightly different: "Perform inhalation and exhalation rapidly like the bellows (of a blacksmith). This is called kapalbhati and it destroys all disorders of kapha."

The major difference between the presentations of this technique in the two traditions is that in *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*, written by Yogi Swatmarama, there is no mention of breathing through alternate nostrils. It can be assumed that this is in fact a preparation for Yogi Swatmarama's version of bhasrika pranayama. The practice of vatakrama kapalbhati through both nostrils is a preparatory practice. As can be seen in other shatkarmas, Yogi Swatmarama seems to be dealing with the shatkarmas at a more introductory level than Sage Gheranda.

Variation I

Sit in any comfortable asana. The spine should be upright, the eyes gently closed and the whole body relaxed. Start the first round. Inhale through both nostrils. The breath should feel as if it enters the abdomen, not the chest, which remains still.

Then, contracting the abdominal muscles, breathe out forcefully through both nostrils. After that take a deep breath in and again exhale forcefully through both nostrils.

Duration: In the beginning, 10 breaths makes one round. At the end of a round take a free breath. Practise no more than three rounds. This count can be gradually increased over a period of several weeks or months.

Practice note: For the entire practice breathing should be through the nose, not the mouth. If the nose is blocked, jala neti should be performed beforehand. Fast breathing with forced exhalation is adopted as one becomes comfortable with the practice.

Variation 2

Sit in any comfortable asana. The spine should be straight, the eyes gently closed and the whole body relaxed. Start the first round. Inhale through the left nostril. The breath should feel as if it enters the abdomen, not the chest, which remains still. Then, contracting the abdominal muscles, breathe out forcefully through the left nostril.

Practise 10 times through the left nostril, 10 times through the right and 10 times through both. This makes one round. If tiredness or strain is experienced, wait for some time, allowing the breath to return to normal before starting a second round.

Duration: In the beginning do no more than three rounds. The count and number can be increased gradually, depending on capacity. Do not strain.

Practice note: This practice is started slowly, picking up speed subsequently, when control is achieved. The time taken for inhalation and exhalation is equal.

Variation 3

Sit in a meditation posture and become aware of the natural breath. Start the first round. Inhale with an

abdominal breath through both nostrils. Breathe in slowly and comfortably. The abdominal muscles should lengthen naturally as the diaphragm descends; do not exert any kind of force on the abdominal muscles. The breath should feel as if it enters the abdomen, not the chest, which remains still. Then, contracting the abdominal muscles, breathe out forcefully, emptying the lungs completely. Retain the breath outside for as long as possible without straining. There should be no tension. This makes one round.

If tiredness or strain is experienced, wait for some time, allowing the breath return to normal before starting a second round.

Duration: In the beginning do no more than 20 breaths, which makes one round. This can be increased over a period of weeks and months, depending on individual capacity. There should be no tension.

Sage Gheranda's practice

Sit in a meditative asana with awareness of the natural breath. Start the first round. Inhale with an abdominal breath through the left nostril. Breathe comfortably and as fully as possible. Then, contracting the abdominal muscles, breathe out forcefully through the right nostril. Take a deep breath in through the right nostril. Exhale forcefully through the left nostril, emptying the lungs completely. This makes one round. If tiredness or strain are experienced, wait until the breath returns to normal.

Duration: In the beginning practise 20 breaths in one round. This count and number can be gradually increased, depending on a person's capacity. There should be no tension in this process.

Awareness: Fix the mind at chidakasha, the dark empty space inside the forehead. Look at this space with the eyes closed. The lungs should move like a bellows. Feel

pranic vibrations in chidakasha. Also feel that the frontal portion of the brain is being purified.

Frequency: Experienced practitioners with a strong and pure body can do this practice for hours at a time, but in general not more than 10 to 20 rounds are recommended. Beginners should do two to three rounds only. After some weeks the number of rounds can be increased one by one.

Time of practice: In daily practice, just before meditation. Do not do this practice at night, otherwise there will be difficulty sleeping.

Precautions: If any feelings of unwellness are experienced, the practice should be stopped. Do not practise in extremely hot weather, or when dehydrated, or if suffering from irritability or anger. Although this practice can be adapted so that it is helpful during labour, it is not recommended during pregnancy without expert guidance.

Contra-indications: This practice should not be undertaken by people suffering from high blood pressure, heart problems, ulcers, fever, constipation, hernia, anger or excessive restlessness.

Benefits: Fresh air reaches the lower peripheries of the lungs, while stale air is expelled. During this practice the respiratory system is activated, and the exchange of oxygen and carbon dioxide is increased. This practice benefits people suffering from respiratory ailments, including chronic bronchitis and tuberculosis. People suffering from severe asthma and chronic lung disease often get into the habit of using extra muscles (accessory muscles of respiration) to breathe forcibly, and exhaling with increased muscular force, which makes the muscles tired and causes fatigue. Such people should practise kapalbhati but not while having an asthmatic attack.

In the normal breathing process, the muscles of respiration (the diaphragm and intercostal muscles) actively contract during inspiration. During exhalation they

generally relax passively. One has to make an effort to breathe in, whereas no effort is required for exhalation. Vatakrama kapalbhati reverses this process. In this technique, exhalation requires effort and is active, while inhalation is natural or passive. This causes different neuronal pathways within the brain to fire and thus helps to awaken the brain centres. The practice also activates the muscles involved in exhalation (mainly the abdominal muscles), thus increasing the blood flow to them.

This practice also activates, massages and strengthens the digestive organs. It increases cardiac output. With the increased blood flow, the frontal portion of the brain becomes pure and more active. At the subtle level, prana shakti flows in this region of the brain. As well as bringing about improvement in the respiratory system and abdomen, this is one of the best practices for purification of the frontal region of the brain. It is a powerful technique to make the mind peaceful and aware.

After practising ten rounds of kapalbhati, one will not feel like sleeping. People who become tired after doing mental work, or who go to sleep or feel like sleeping after getting up in the morning will find this practice very beneficial.

Kapalbhati and meditation

Kapalbhati is an ideal preparation for meditation and those wishing to achieve progress in meditation should practise kapalbhati prior to meditating. Kapalbhati makes the mind peaceful and receptive, helping it to rise above emotions and become thoughtless. It is best to practise chidakasha dharana after kapalbhati.

Hatha yogis believe that ida and pingala nadis are purified by doing kapalbhati. In kundalini yoga it is said that at times one nadi flows while at other times the other nadi flows. In general, the flow of breath in the nostrils, the *swara*, changes every 45 minutes. It alternates between the right

nostril, which is associated with pingala nadi, and the left nostril, which is associated with ida nadi. When sushumna flows, prana flows freely through both nostrils at the same time. Only rarely do both nadis flow simultaneously, but it can be experienced if there is awareness of the breathing process. However, when the flow of the breath is equal in both nostrils, it still cannot be assumed that both ida and pingala nadis are free from disorders; an equal flow of air in both nostrils just happens from time to time.

It has also been said in kundalini yoga that if a practitioner does not have control over the swara and nadis, then pure, stainless kundalini, free from any disorder, could rise through nadis that are disordered and impure. If kundalini starts rising through ida or pingala nadi the person will begin to have certain experiences such as extreme dullness or excitability, depending on the state of the nadi and which nadi is involved. Without sufficient preparation of body, mind and prana, sometimes the person may even become mad, losing body consciousness. However, if the cleansing process has been done properly, the rising of kundalini will be through the sushumna passage.

2. VYUTKRAMA KAPALBHATI (sinus cleansing)

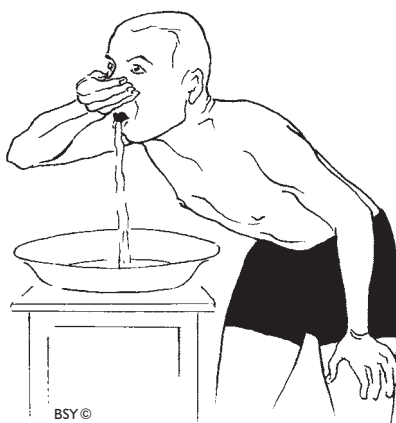
Verse 58

नासाभ्यां जलमाकृष्य पुनर्वक्त्रेण रेचयेत् ।
पायं पायं व्युत्क्रमेण श्लेष्मादोषं निवारयेत् ॥ 58 ॥

*Naasaabhyaam jalamaakrishya punarvaktrena rechayet;
Paayam paayam vyutkramena shleshmaadosham nivaarayet.*

Suck water through both nostrils and expel it through the mouth. Practise this repeatedly. This vyutkrama kapalbhati removes kapha disorders.

This practice is similar to jala neti.



Technique

Vyutkrama is taking in water through the nose, holding it in the throat and then expelling it through the mouth. As in jala neti, after the water cleanses the nasal passages, not only the nostrils but the throat and the pharynx, the area behind the nose and mouth, are cleansed.

Benefits: When water enters the mouth via the nose, it touches certain nerves which generally do not come into contact with water or the tongue. If there is an attempt to touch the nasopharynx, the area behind the nostrils, by folding the tongue backwards, usually the tongue will not be able to reach it. In general, only the flow of the breath reaches this point. When the tongue does touch that region, as in perfected khechari mudra, the sensation created by this contact awakens bindu chakra.

It is said that after perfecting khechari mudra, nectar flows from bindu and one drinks nectar. The practice of vyutkrama is recommended for those people who cannot gain mastery over khechari mudra. It stimulates the nadis which lie in the region of the nasopharynx and bindu visarga is awakened to some extent. The awakening of bindu does not necessarily mean that nectar will start dripping. It takes time, because there are some centres in the body that are extremely sensitive

and activated by any kind of touch, but there are other centres that need constant pressure. The centre which secretes nectar and brings it down from bindu is truly awakened only by the pressure of khechari mudra.

3. SHEETKRAMA KAPALBHATI (mucus cleansing)

The third practice is sheetkrama kapalbhati in which water is sucked in through the mouth and expelled through the nose.

Verses 59–60

शीत्कृत्य पीत्वा वक्त्रेण नासानालविरचयेत् ।
एवमभ्यासयोगेन कामदेव समो भवेत् ॥ 59 ॥
न जायते वार्द्धकं च ज्वरो नैव प्रजायते ।
भवेत्स्वच्छन्द देहश्च कफ दोषं निवारयेत् ॥ 60 ॥

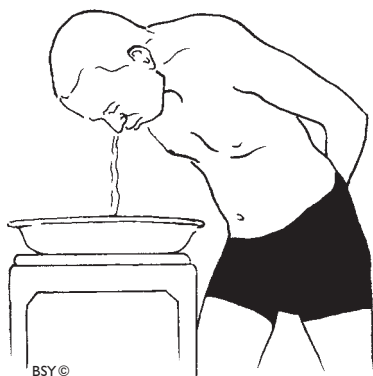
*Sheetkritya peetvaa vaktrena naasaanaalarvirechayet;
Evamabhyasayogena kaamadeva samo bhavet. (59)*

*Na jaayate vaarddhakam cha jvaro naiva prajaayate;
Bhavetsvachchhanda dehashcha kapha dosham nivaarayet. (60)*

Suck in water through the mouth with a hissing sound and expel it through the nose. Through this practice the body of the practitioner becomes as beautiful as that of Cupid and signs of old age do not manifest. Cleanliness and purity manifest in the body and kapha dosha is removed.

Technique

Here *sheetkara* means breathing in deeply making a sound, and sucking water inside. While doing sheetkara, curl the tongue so that a channel is created inside the mouth. This part of the practice is reminiscent of sheetali pranayama. Create suction so that water enters the mouth and moves towards the stomach via the curled tongue.



Hold the water in the mouth, and then expel a small amount of water through the nose every few seconds. A second small amount of water should then be taken in through the mouth and expelled. In this way water is slowly expelled through the nose in small instalments, with each expulsion lasting one second.

Benefits: *Evamabhyaasayogena kaamadeva samo bhavet*, by doing this practice a person starts looking like Kamadeva, the god of love. This practice has many benefits. One becomes healthy as impurities of the body are removed and the face glows. A person who perfects this practice is not marked by disease or old age. When a person is healthy, fewer wrinkles appear. A truly healthy person will have a happy life even in old age, but an unhealthy person feels frail even when young.

From a scientific angle, the condition described here is one of ideal health. When the body becomes completely free from internal disorders, when the negative effects of the doshas described in ayurveda do not remain, and when the mind is peaceful and steady, real health is attained. This achievement is not only physical, but also mental.

Sage Gheranda points out the use of this cleansing technique for attaining good health and beauty. This is, however, only a side effect, the reason for it being the

awakening of bindu visarga. When bindu is awakened and the nectar of immortality, *amrita*, flows, the body becomes lustrous.

In conclusion

In the yogic tradition, shatkarma are embedded in the study of pranayama. This is not so clear when one begins to study the *Gheranda Samhita* because the first chapter is devoted to so many variations of shatkarma. At that stage one has no perspective, so shatkarma tends to be practised as an end in itself. However, by the time the chapter on pranayama is reached, under the guidance of an experienced teacher, a different perspective will have been acquired.

King Chandakapali asks Sage Gheranda, “How are the nadis purified? Please teach me all about this.” His guru replies, “The vital air cannot enter the nadis while they are full of impurities, so how can pranayama be accomplished? How can there be knowledge of the tattwas? Therefore, one should first purify the nadis and only then practise pranayama. This purification of the nadis is of two kinds: *samanu* and *nirmanu*. *Samanu* is done as a mental process with mantras, *nirmanu* is done by physical cleansing. The shatkarmas (i.e. *nirmanu* pranayama) have already been taught, now listen . . .”

But first one should practise what has been taught so far. Find an experienced guide and begin the practice.

Chapter Two

Asana

Introduction to Asana

In the first chapter Sage Gheranda taught six main *shatkarmas*, cleansing practices, to his disciple, King Chandakapali. These are given as prerequisites before practising yoga asanas. In the second chapter Sage Gheranda introduces the king to various useful yoga asanas.

Asanas were first taught by Lord Shiva to his consort, the goddess Parvati. According to the tradition there are eighty-four lakh (8,400,000) asanas, but not all of these are still known. Out of these, there are eighty-four main asanas which continue to be taught to this day.

After cleansing with the shatkarmas, asanas are practised in order to achieve physical stability and steadiness – in this context, steadiness also means stability of the body; it should be remembered that asana is a state of the body. When one can remain comfortably in one position for a long time, without any tension or physical pain, that state is called *asana*. The *Yoga Sutras* of Sage Patanjali defines asana as *sthiraasukhamaasanam*, a physical posture in which one can remain steady and comfortable.

From the teaching point of view, asanas have been divided into two parts: dynamic asanas and stable or static asanas. Initially, dynamic asanas are practised to develop flexibility and control of the body. In the initial stages of practice, pain and tension are created in the muscles if one tries to hold the body in a steady asana for a long time. This

results in dissipation, discomfort and disappointment, all of which are contrary to the aim of asana. Once dynamic asanas have increased the flexibility and strength of the body, one is ready to begin the practice of static asanas. Asana practice has some subtle effects on the body. One example is a change in the breathing process. During asana practice the habit of taking slow, deep breaths is developed, which in turn helps the practitioner to achieve mental and emotional balance.

The first aim of asanas is relief from physical and mental distress. By creating temporary tension, which stimulates the elimination of toxins from the body, asanas make the joints of the body flexible and improve the health of the muscles. They also bring about coordination in the functioning of the nervous system and increase the efficiency of the internal organs due to their light massaging effect. Thus, with regular practice of asanas the body gradually becomes healthier.

Although Sage Gheranda taught only thirty-two asanas to King Chandakapali for stability of the body, he says that each asana is based on the normal physical state of creatures in the universe. And this is still twice the number of asanas taught by Yogi Swatmarama in *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*.

It should be noted that the asanas discussed in *Gheranda Samhita* are not for beginners. Rather, they are final states or postures. The body needs to be prepared for the practice of these static final-state asanas through a range of asanas and their variations from the preparatory or dynamic groups. Dynamic asanas are an essential preparation for static asanas. For example, three variations of siddhasana are described in other texts on hatha yoga, but here only the final version is given. Similarly, the other asanas also have many variations, but in *Gheranda Samhita* only the final positions are described.

Verses 1–2

आसनानि समस्तानि यावन्तो जीवजन्तवः ।
चतुरशीति लक्षाणि शिवेन कथितानि च ॥ 1 ॥
तेषां मध्ये विशिष्टानि षोडशोऽनं शतं कृतम् ।
तेषां मध्ये मर्त्यलोके द्वात्रिंशदासनं शुभम् ॥ 2 ॥

*Aasanaani samastaani yaavanto jeevajantavah;
Chaturasheeti lakshaani shivena kathitaani cha. (1)*

*Teshaam madhye vishishtaani shodashonam shatam kritam;
Teshaam madhye martyaloke dvaatrimshadaasanam shubham. (2)*

The number of asanas is the same as the number of animal species in the world. Lord Shiva described eighty-four lakh asanas first of all, out of which eighty-four are best. Out of these eighty-four asanas, thirty-two asanas should be considered as especially auspicious in this mortal world.

Adapting or following the normal physical postures of all the species of animals in this world is called asana. Lord Shiva has described eighty-four lakh (8,400,000) asanas. Out of those, eighty-four are important, and of these, thirty-two have been considered essential for the mortal world. It seems that all thirty-two asanas described by Sage Gheranda are practised in their static form.

The Asana

Verses 3–6

सिद्धं पद्मं तथा भद्रं मुक्तं वज्रं च स्वस्तिकम् ।
सिंहं च गोमुखं वीरं धनुरासनमेव च ॥3॥
मृतं गुप्तं तथा मात्स्यं मत्स्येन्द्रासनमेव च ।
गोरक्षं पश्चिमोत्तानमुत्कटं सङ्कटं तथा ॥4॥
मयूरं कुक्कुटं कूर्मं तथा चोत्तानकूर्मकम् ।
उत्तानमण्डुकं वृक्षं मण्डुकं गरुडं वृषम् ॥5॥
शलभं मकरं चोष्ट्रं भुजङ्गां योगमासनम् ।
द्वात्रिंशदासनान्येव मर्त्ये सिद्धिप्रदानि च ॥6॥

*Siddham padmam tathaa bhadram muktam vajram cha svastikam;
Simham cha gomukham veeram dhanuraasanameva cha. (3)*

*Mritam guptam tathaa maatsyam matsyendraasanameva cha;
Goraksham pashchimottaanamutkatam sankatam tathaa. (4)*

*Mayooram kukkutam koormam tathaa chottaanakoormakam;
Uttaanamandukam vriksham mandukam garudam vrisham. (5)*

*Shalabham makaram choshtram bhujangam yogamaasanam;
Dvatrimshadaasanaanyeva martye siddhipradaani cha. (6)*

In this mortal world, where the death of every human being is mandatory, the following thirty-two asanas are sufficient to attain siddhi or perfection: 1. Siddhasana, 2. Padmasana, 3. Bhadrasana, 4. Muktasana, 5. Vajrasana,

6. Swastikasana, 7. Simhasana, 8. Gomukhasana, 9. Veerasana, 10. Dhanurasana, 11. Mritasana (Shavasana), 12. Guptasana, 13. Matsyasana, 14. Matsyendrasana, 15. Gorakshasana, 16. Paschimottanasana, 17. Utkatasana, 18. Sankatasana, 19. Mayurasana, 20. Kukkutasana, 21. Koormasana, 22. Utthan koormasana, 23. Mandukasana, 24. Utthan mandukasana, 25. Vrikshasana, 26. Garudasana, 27. Vrishasana, 28. Shalabhasana, 29. Makarasana, 30. Ushtrasana, 31. Bhujangasana, 32. Yogasana.

I. SIDDHASANA (accomplished pose)

Verses 7–8

योनिस्थानकमङ्घ्रिमूलघटितं संपीड्य गुल्फेतरम् ।
मेढ्रोपर्यथ सन्निधाय चिबुकं कृत्वा हृदि स्थापितम् ॥ 7 ॥
स्थाणुः संयमितेन्द्रियोऽचलदृशा पश्यन्भ्रुवोरन्तरम् ।
ह्येतन्मोक्षकवाटभेदनकरं सिद्धासनं प्रोच्यते ॥ 8 ॥

*Yonisthaanakamanghrimoolaghatitam sampeedya gulphetaram;
Medhroparyatha sannidhaaya chibukam kritvaa hridi sthaapitam.*

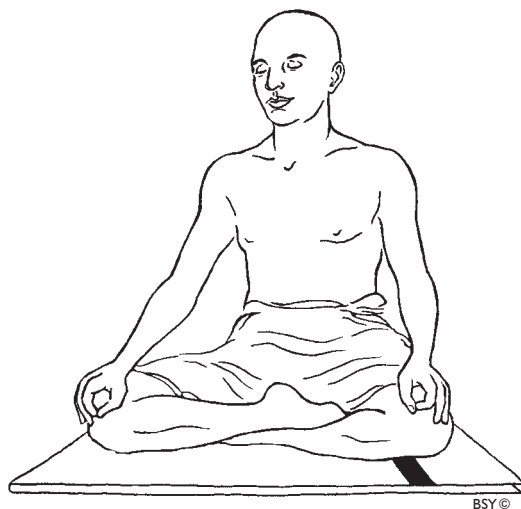
(7)

*Sthaanuh samyamitendriyo'chaladrishaa pashyanbhruvorantaram;
Hyetanmokshakavaatabhedanakaram siddhaasanam prochyate.* (8)

An ascetic yogi places the heel of one foot midway between the genitals and the anus with the other heel pressing the pubis. Placing the chin on the chest, one remains motionless in a steady posture. Keeping the vision unmoved, one gazes at the eyebrow centre. Liberation, is attained on perfecting this practice, which is called siddhasana.

This asana is a symbol of energy and perfection, hence its name is *siddhasana* for men and *siddha yoni asana* for women. It is the best asana for the practice of meditation. More often

than not it is used to exert light but steady pressure in the area of the groin linked with mooladhara chakra in special sadhanas.



Simple variation

This practice may be performed with either leg uppermost, and either heel pressing the perineum.

Sit with the legs straight in front of the body. Bend the right knee and place the sole of the right foot flat against the inner left thigh, then sit on top of the right heel so that it presses the perineum, the area between the genitals and anus in men, or the vagina in women. Adjust the body until it is comfortable and the pressure of the heel is firmly applied.

Bend the left leg and place the left ankle directly over the right ankle so that the ankle bones are touching and the heels are one above the other. If possible, press the pubic bone with the left heel directly above the genitals. In men the genitals lie pressed between the two heels. In females one heel is above the other close to the vagina. If this is too difficult, the left heel can simply be placed as near as possible to the pubis.

The feet are then locked into position by grasping the right toes and pulling them up into the space between the left calf and thigh. Push the toes and outer edge of the left foot into the space between the right calf and thigh muscles. In this position the legs are locked in the asana. In the version of siddhasana meant for prolonged meditation, the whole spine, neck and head are kept upright and straight without tension. The lower spine should not slump, but be kept straight so that the abdominal region is not compressed. Otherwise, due to abdominal compression, pain will be felt in the waist and lower abdomen. When the abdominal region remains unrestricted and expanded, there is no pain and the apana vayu flows properly.

The abdomen and chest relax and the hands remain on the knees in jnana mudra or chin mudra. Ensure that the knees remain in contact with the floor. Once the asana is established, imagine the body is grounded like a tree.

The body should feel completely comfortable. If necessary, a thin cushion can be used to raise the buttocks, reducing the pressure on the lower portion of the ankles. Each practitioner should decide whether to bend the right or left knee first, according to personal preference. To sit in this asana the ankles must be sufficiently flexible. Do not strain in the beginning.

For men, at first it may only be possible to hold the posture for one or two minutes due to pressure on the perineum, but with regular practice the discomfort will ease and the duration will gradually increase.

Breathing: Natural, deep or ujjayi breathing according to the meditation practised.

Contra-indications: Those who suffer from sciatica, sacral infections, disorders in the lower spine or enlargement of the testes should not do this practice. In the full version of this asana described by Sage Gheranda, the contra-indications for jalandhara bandha and shambhavi mudra should be noted.

Benefits: Siddhasana and siddha yoni asana hold the spinal column stable, which is very important for meditation. The lower foot presses the area of mooladhara chakra, creating a physical equivalent to moola bandha. The upper foot presses the pubis which in turn exerts pressure on the swadhisthana region, leading to a physical equivalent of vajroli/sahajoli mudra being experienced automatically. This results in waves of energy travelling from the spinal column to the brain, establishing control over the secretion of the reproductive hormones, which is essential for spiritual progress.

A tingling sensation in the mooladhara region may occur when practising for prolonged periods. This sensation may continue for ten to fifteen minutes and is due to a reduction in the blood supply to the area and the rebalancing of the pranic flow in the lower chakras.

This asana redirects blood circulation to the lower spine and abdomen, toning the lumbar region of the spine, the pelvis and the abdominal organs, as well as balancing the reproductive system and blood pressure. It is a useful asana for those who are prone to night emissions as the pressure on the nerves and nadis of the perineum strengthens the internal glands, bringing greater control over the sexual function.

Apart from these physiological effects, siddhasana creates physical stability and increased energy. The awakening of mooladhara chakra can occur with the correct practice of this asana. In kundalini yoga, siddhasana and its female equivalent, siddhi yoni asana are practised to generate the upward movement of apana vayu.

Full practice

Sage Gheranda says that practising this asana brings mental control and a state of *shoonya*, thoughtlessness. When the pranas are activated and the mind becomes thoughtless, the path of *moksha*, liberation, is automatically opened.

Sthaanuh samyamitendriyo'chaladrishaa pashyanbhruvorantaram indicates that the chin should be touching the chest in jalandhara bandha, and then one also gazes at the eyebrow centre, which indicates shambhavi mudra. According to Sage Gheranda the final position of siddhasana includes jalandhara bandha and shambhavi mudra, which indicates he is speaking to advanced practitioners.

When jalandhara bandha is practised, the chin is placed against the chest and *kumbhaka*, breath retention, is automatically achieved. But for how long can the breath be held? Average practitioners can only practise kumbhaka for a short period before there is a feeling of discomfort. If control over the breath can be mastered, enabling breath retention to be practised for longer periods of time, mental turmoil ceases and physical energy is increased. The nervous system is maintained in a calm and normalized state. Practising siddhasana increases internal energy and expands the pranas, thus strengthening the capacity and stamina of the body and mind.

The secret practice

In different traditions this same practice is sometimes given different names: *guptaasana*, the secret posture, *vajrasana*, the thunderbolt posture, or *muktasana*, the posture for liberation, which shows its importance. In *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*, siddhasana is described at length and is said to be the most important of all the asanas. The full practice with shambhavi and jalandhara is given, and also the simple variation.

Sage Gheranda is laconic. He simply gives the physical instructions and the practitioner is left to wonder how a meditative posture such as siddhasana can be performed with jalandhara bandha, which causes the breath to stop.

In *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (1:39–42), Yogi Swatmarama explains the secret. After the physical procedures are outlined, he continues: “Of all the eighty-four (important) asanas, siddhasana should always be practised. It purifies the 72,000 nadis. The yogi who meditates on the self, (atma),

takes moderate and pure food and practises siddhasana for twelve years attains siddhi. When perfection is attainable through siddhasana, what is the use of practising many other asanas? When the flow of prana is stabilized, the breath stops spontaneously (kevala kumbhaka) and a mindless state (unmani) arises by itself. Thus through securing siddhasana, the three bandhas occur by themselves.”

When Sage Gheranda includes shambhavi mudra and jalandhara, with its implications of kumbhaka, in his description of siddhasana, he is describing the position which facilitates a meditative process. The simple variation outlined above can be practised, but to experience the full version is not so much a practice as a state of attainment.

2. PADMASANA (lotus pose)

Verse 9

वामोरूपरि दक्षिणं हि चरणं संस्थाप्य वामं तथा
दक्षोरूपरि, पश्चिमेन विधिना धृत्वा कराभ्यां दृढम् ।
अङ्गुष्ठौ हृदये निधाय चिबुकं नासाग्रमालोकयेत्
एतद्व्याधिविकारनाशनकरं पद्मासनं प्रोच्यते ॥9॥

*Vaamoroopari dakshinam hi charanam samsthaapya vaamam tathaa,
Dakshoroopari paschimena vidhinaa dhritvaa karaabhyaam dridham;
Angushthau hridhaye nidhaaya chibukam naasaagramaalokeyet,
Etadvyaadhivikaaranaashanakaram padmaasanam prochyate.*

Keeping the left foot on the right thigh and the right foot on the left thigh, bring the arms behind the back and catch hold of the left big toe with the right hand and the right big toe firmly with the left hand, look at the nosetip, keeping the chin in contact with the heart. It eradicates all diseases. It is called padmasana.

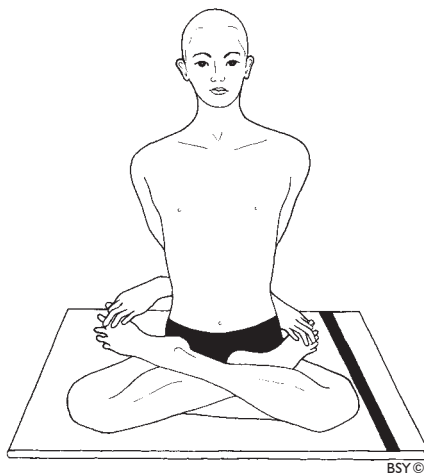
Padmasana is one of the best asanas for meditation as the body can be completely stable for a long time. In the

beginning, sitting in this asana may seem difficult, but with regular practice it is perfected. In the version of padmasana designed for prolonged meditation practices, the trunk and head remain upright. In the version described by Sage Gheranda, the neck is bent forward in jalandhara bandha. However, in both versions the body is firm and steady, as if made of stone, and the position of the legs and feet provides a firm base.



Simple variation

Sit with the legs straight out in front of the body and separate the feet. Next, place one foot on the thigh of the other leg and the second foot on the thigh of the first leg. The soles should be facing upwards with the heels touching the lower abdomen. In the final position both knees are in contact with the floor. Try to keep the head and back upright and straight without exerting any force. Close the eyes and let the hands rest on the knees in chin or jnana mudra. This is the position generally accepted as padmasana.



Full practice

The asana corresponding to Sage Gheranda's description is now usually called *baddha padmasana*, the bound lotus pose. It means, one is locked into padmasana. To do this, cross the arms behind the body, firmly holding the right big toe with the left hand and the left big toe with the right hand. Sage Gheranda further says, *hridaye nidhaaya chibukam naasaagramaalokayet*, bring the chin to the heart and focus at the nosetip, which means that jalandhara bandha and nasikagra drishti are included in the final position.

Precautions: Preparatory practices are needed to make the hips, knees and ankles flexible before assuming padmasana. The pawanmuktasana series part 1 should be practised for some months or years until the practice can be performed with ease (refer to *Asana Pranayama Mudra Bandha* by Swami Satyananda Saraswati). The body should not be forced into padmasana if it lacks flexibility. To begin with, only hold the pose for a short time. The flexibility of the ankles and knees is not improved by bearing pain when the tendons and nerves of the body warn that they are under stress.

Contra-indications: People suffering from sciatica, sacral infections or weak or injured knees should not perform this asana. It is not advisable during pregnancy as the circulation in the legs is reduced. In the full version of this asana described by Sage Gheranda, the contra-indications for jalandhara bandha and nasikagra drishti should also be noted.

Benefits: Padmasana is helpful in achieving physical and mental stability and peace. This is not simply a belief, but a physiological fact. It has been shown that during such asanas, sensations emanating from the lower spinal column through a group of nadis enter the brain, calming the nervous system. The experience of mental peace subsequently enhances physical health.

In padmasana, pressure is exerted on the lower vertebral column, resulting in relaxation of the nervous system. The breathing becomes slow, muscular tension is reduced and the blood pressure is lowered. Physical stability induces mental stability. Due to the positioning of the feet and the pressure exerted on the thighs, the circulation of blood to the lower limbs is reduced and the blood flow to the abdomen is increased, activating the digestive fire and increasing the appetite.

Ida and pingala are the two main nadis located along the vertebral column. Their influence spreads to every part of the body. These nadis have a relationship with the nerves carrying sensory information to the brain, providing knowledge and enabling awareness to arise. While in padmasana, this process of receiving and acting on sensory input is subdued. Physiologically, this means that reduced stimulation takes place and there is a state of calmness. During this process, beta, alpha and theta waves are generated. Padmasana also facilitates the experience of meditation by directing the flow of prana from mooladhara to sahasrara.

The text says that padmasana includes jalandhara bandha and nasikagra drishti. The implications of

jalandhara bandha and the ensuing kumbhaka have been commented on while discussing siddhasana. The same applies here.

Also, in nasikagra drishti, the eyes should be half open and the gaze should be fixed at the nosetip. This is a very effective technique for internalizing the mind and a very powerful way of making chitta one-pointed and peaceful.

The verse also states that the practice of padmasana destroys or eradicates diseases, but notice that practically the same thing is said about all the asanas. At the end of the description of each asana, it is stated that practising it removes diseases. Even if it is understood that the practice of these static asanas brings the mental benefits of a peaceful mind and a reduction in thoughts and internal excitement, doubts may remain about the removal of physical ailments. Therefore, it needs to be understood how yoga works to overcome disease.

Yogic management of disease

Diseases which originate from the body and then influence the mind are called somopsychic diseases. They may be due to bacteria or external impurities entering the body. Diseases which originate in the mind and then influence the body are called psychosomatic diseases. Diseases are therefore of two types and, according to yoga, eighty percent of physical diseases originate in the mind.

According to this principle, when the mind is peaceful and stable, when it is calm and no longer excited, when internal tension and affliction are absent, there is also an effect on the body. The body automatically starts to become more controlled and balanced.

Modern scientific medicine tends to treat the symptoms of a disease. Headache is a symptom, not a disease. Taking a painkilling tablet such as aspirin cures the symptom, not the cause. Asthma is also a symptom. Taking medicine or

spraying a bronchodilator expands the airways for a while, but the disease remains and is not rooted out. Diabetes is also a symptom. In diabetes the pancreas is not producing sufficient insulin. The insulin can be replaced by injection, but this does not correct the functioning of the pancreas.

It has often been observed that yogic practices heal many physical diseases. With the practice of yoga nidra, the body and *antahkarana*, the inner apparatus consisting of ego, intellect, memory and thought/counter-thought, attains a state of rest. Tension, worries and distress are removed. Japa increases self-confidence. Pranayama enhances the immune power of the body and balances the pranas.

Yoga uses these principles for treatment. Often it may appear that the practices which are prescribed could aggravate a disease, but those practices leave a positive effect on the mind, brain, nervous system and endocrine glands and enable them to function properly.

It is believed that if the body becomes stable, the mind becomes steady, and that stability of the mind influences the body. Daily practice establishes and regulates the healthy at-ease state of the body and mind in which dis-ease is eradicated. That is why for almost every asana it is said, *sarva vyaadhi vinaashakam*, all diseases are destroyed.

Meditation in padmasana

In *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*, padmasana is counted as one of the four most important asanas; both the simple and bound variations are hinted at. The basic position of the limbs, jalandhara bandha and nasikagra drishti are the same as in *Gheranda Samhita*, with the added detail of pressing the tongue behind the teeth.

However, when describing the benefits of the posture (HYP 1:48–49), Yogi Swatmarama's instruction is to have the palms one on top of the other, i.e. the hands are released and a description is given of the technique for each inhalation and exhalation, indicating that jalandhara bandha must be released: "Keeping the palms one above the other, chin on

the chest, and concentrating the mind on the Self, repeatedly draw the vital air up from the anal region and bring the inhaled prana downwards. (Thus joining the two) one gets the highest knowledge by awakening the shakti. The yogi who, seated in padmasana, inhales through the entrances of the nadis and fills them with vital air (*maruta*) undoubtedly gains liberation.”

Again, it can be seen that the practice should be learned from an experienced guide. Sitting in padmasana is not just a matter of increasing physical flexibility. Rather, the physical posture facilitates raising the energy and the mental capacity, so that one becomes able to concentrate on the inner self.

3. BHADRASANA (gracious pose)

Verses 10–11

गुल्फौ च वृषणस्याधोव्युत्क्रमेण समाहितः ।
पादाङ्गुष्ठौ कराभ्यां च धृत्वा वै पृष्ठदेशतः ॥ 10॥
जालन्धर समासाद्य नासाग्रमवलोकयेत् ।
भद्रासनं भवेदेतत्सर्वव्याधिविनाशकम् ॥ 11॥

Gulphau cha vrishanasyaadhovyutkramena samaahitah;
Paadaangushthau karaabhyaam cha dhritvaa vai prishthadeshatah. (10)

Jaalandharam samaasaadya naasaagramavalokayet;
Bhadraasanam bhavedetatsarvavyaadhivinaashakam. (11)

With care, place both heels underneath the testes. Hold both big toes from behind, adopt jalandhara bandha and gaze at the nosetip. Bhadrasana eradicates all diseases.

The various authors and commentators have regarded different asanas as best for meditation. Sage Patanjali described the asana for meditation as *sthiram* and *sukham*, steady and comfortable. Yogi Swatmarama has recommended

four main asanas for meditation: siddhasana, padmasana, simhasana and bhadrasana.

The simple variation practised today is predominantly a pose for spiritual aspirants, because by merely adopting this position, mooladhara chakra starts to become activated. To attempt the method described by Sage Gheranda requires very flexible ankles.



Simple variation

Today, bhadrasana is generally practised as follows. Sit in vajrasana, keeping the big toes together. Separate the knees as far as possible. Separate the heels just enough to allow the buttocks and the perineum to rest flat on the floor between the feet. Try to separate the knees further without straining. Place the hands on the knees, with the palms downward. When the body is comfortable, practise *nasikagra drishti*, gazing at the nosetip. If the eyes become tired, close them for a few seconds, then resume concentration on the nosetip.

A variation of bhadrasana is to take hold of the big toes with the hands while in the position.



Full practice

Stretch the feet out in front of the body. Bend the right knee, folding the foot next to the body, with the toes pointing to the anus and the heel pointing to the front of the body and lifted slightly towards the navel. The left foot is then also folded and placed in the same way. The soles are in contact with each other, as when the feet are brought close to the body in the practice of *poorna titali asana*, the full butterfly pose (refer to *Asana Pranayama Mudra Bandha* by Swami Satyananda Saraswati). Both soles remain together, but in *bhadrasana* the heels are lifted up and the toes of both feet are brought closer to the anus. The heels can still be seen at the front of the body and the toes are tucked under the perineum. If possible, hold the big toes from behind. Both knees remain in contact with the floor. *Jalandhara bandha* and *nasikagra drishti* are also practised.

Breathing: The breath should be slow and rhythmic with awareness of the breath at the nosetip.

Duration: For spiritual benefits the asana must be performed for extended periods of time.

Initially, a few minutes practice daily will loosen up the legs and make the feet flexible. If any strain is experienced, stop the practice.

Awareness: For physical benefits, awareness of the natural breath at the nosetip. For spiritual benefits, awareness of mooladhara chakra is practised.

Benefits: Bhadrasana is an excellent meditative asana. The pressure exerted on vajra nadi in the anal region enhances the digestive power. The practices of ashwini and vajroli mudras may occur spontaneously.

On the pranic level the practice of bhadrasana controls and balances the flow of prana and directs it upwards. Pressure is also exerted in the mooladhara, swadhisthana and manipura regions, and therefore bhadrasana is also an excellent method of calming the brain and reducing mental excitement.

4. MUKTASANA (free pose)

Verse 12

पायुमूले वामगुल्फं दक्षगुल्फं तथोपरि ।
समकायशिरोग्रीवं मुक्तासनं तु सिद्धिदम् ॥ 12॥

*Paayumoole vaamagulpham dakshagulpham tathopari;
Samakaayashirogreevam muktaasanam tu siddhidam.*

Keeping the left heel close to the perineum, place the right heel over it and sit with the head, neck and body upright and straight. Muktasana provides siddhi (perfection) to yogis.

The practice of *muktasana*, the free pose, is very simple. Most people can sit in this asana. Its other name is *sukhasana*, the easy or pleasant pose. While sitting in this asana, the entire weight of the body is supported by the buttocks, sometimes with a very small area in contact with the floor. Therefore, the base of the body may become painful when sitting in this

asana for longer periods of time. To alleviate this, place a pillow underneath the buttocks.



Technique

Stretch the legs straight out in front of the body. Bending the left leg, place the foot under the right thigh and try to bring it as close to the body as possible. The right foot is then placed over the left foot so that the ankles are loosely crossed.

The verse says, *samakaayashirogreevam*, the head and trunk should remain in one line. All the meditative practices involve sitting still and steady. In muktasana, or sukhasana, the hands are generally placed on the knees in jnana mudra or chin mudra. The eyes are kept closed. The whole body is relaxed. Sage Gheranda has recognized this simple sitting position as an asana. Its main purpose is to hold the trunk, spine and head in one straight line.

Benefits: For beginners it is the easiest and most comfortable of all the cross-legged meditative asanas. It can also be used by those who are unable to sit in meditative asanas that require greater flexibility in the legs, facilitating physical and mental balance without causing strain or pain.

Practice note: This posture may be used as a relaxation asana after prolonged sitting in siddhasana or padmasana.

Variation: For those who are extremely stiff, sukhāsana may be performed sitting cross-legged with a cloth tied around the knees and lower back, so that the weight of the knees is supported without them resting on the floor. Hold the spine upright. Concentrate on physical balance and equalizing the weight on the right and left sides of the body. A light, spacey feeling may be experienced.

5. VAJRASANA (thunderbolt pose)

Verse 13

जङ्घाभ्यां वज्रवत्कृत्वा गुदापार्श्वे पदावुभौ ।
वज्रासनं भवेदेतद्योगिना सिद्धिदायकम् ॥ 13 ॥

*Janghaabhyaam vajravatkritvaa gudaapaarshve padaavubhau;
Vajraasanam bhavedetadyoginaam siddhidaayakam.*

Making both thighs hard and strong like vajra, the feet are placed on either side of the anus, and then it becomes vajrasana. This asana provides siddhi (perfection) to yogis.

Making the thighs hard like a *vajra* or thunderbolt, the feet are to be placed at the back of the anus. This is the thunderbolt posture which gives various powers and enables yogis to attain *siddhi*, perfection.

Technique

Kneel with the knees close together, or a little apart if this is not comfortable. Place the feet so that the big toes touch each other and the heels are a little apart. Lower the buttocks so that they rest between the heels on the inside arches of the feet. Place the hands on the thighs near the knees, with the palms down. Hold the



head upright with the back and neck in one straight line. Avoid excessive backward arching of the spine. Close the eyes. Relax the arms and the whole body.

Breathing: Breathe normally and fix the attention on the flow of breath passing in and out of the nostrils.

Duration: Practise this asana for at least five minutes directly after meals to assist digestion. Those with digestive disorders can sit in vajrasana and practise abdominal breathing for 100 breaths before and after meals.

As a meditative asana it can be held for extended periods of time if there are no physical contra-indications applicable.

Contra-indications: Vajrasana is not recommended if suffering from varicose veins or after the first few months of pregnancy.

Practice note: If there is pain in the thighs, the knees may be separated slightly while maintaining the posture. Beginners may find that their ankles ache after a short time in vajrasana. To remedy this, release the posture, sit with the legs stretched forward and shake the feet gently one after the other until the stiffness disappears. Then resume the posture. A folded blanket or small cushion may be placed between the buttocks and the heels for added comfort.

Sage Gheranda considered vajrasana to be a steady asana suitable for meditation. Vajrasana has been identified as a higher practice in yoga. It may be wondered why in other meditation asanas the feet are spread out and the knees separated, while in vajrasana the knees remain together. It is for the simple reason that when the knees remain separated, the thighs are not firm, but remain loose and relaxed. This difference affects the flow of prana shakti.

In vajrasana the flow of prana shakti is different to that of the other meditation asanas. Prana shakti is constantly flowing out of the extreme ends of the body. The objective of any asana, mudra or bandha is to check the outflow of prana shakti and redirect it into the body. In a cross-legged asana, whether siddhasana, padmasana or mukthasana, the flow of prana shakti keeps on taking place from one foot into the body or into the other, if the feet remain in contact with each other. This also applies in vajrasana. However, in vajrasana, the vajra nadi is strongly influenced. Vajra nadi is an important pathway for the flow of energy and for carrying the nervous impulses of the reproductive and urinary systems from the brain to other parts of the body. Vajrasana also helps to control sexual feelings and redirect the energy towards the development of consciousness.

It is a tradition in India to wash the feet of a saint or sage. In some areas, however, such as Maharashtra and in South India, only the big toes are washed, not the whole feet. According to the tradition of these places, energy is emitted from the big toes and whoever receives that energy, in the form of prasada, is fortunate. There are also many stories in the Puranas relating to the big toes. It is said that the holy Ganges originates from the big toe of Lord Vishnu. This is symbolic of the flow of pure, holy energy which flows from the big toes of the feet.

In this asana the big toes are connected with one another, resulting in the reunion of prana shakti. A circuit is formed and the prana shakti flows from one foot to the other, filling the soles of the feet. This same energy then

influences the mooladhara region, helping to awaken mooladhara chakra.

The nadis and nerves passing through the front and sides of the feet are linked with the reproductive and digestive systems. When pressure is applied, these nadis are activated and energized, influencing the digestive system and reproductive organs. This increases the efficiency of the entire digestive system, relieving stomach ailments such as hyperacidity and peptic ulcer. For this reason, practising vajrasana after meals is recommended. Due to the effect on the gonads located in the lower body, it is also an excellent practice for those observing celibacy.

Vajrasana alters the flow of blood and nervous impulses in the pelvic region and strengthens the pelvic muscles. It is a preventive measure against hernia and also helps to relieve piles. It reduces the blood flow to the genitals and massages the nerve fibres which feed them, making it useful in the treatment of dilated testicles and hydrocele in men. Vajrasana can alleviate menstrual disorders.

Practising with the eyes closed and the awareness focused on the breath brings mental peace. Vajrasana is a useful posture for meditation as it gives support to the spine. In sukhasana or siddhasana the body may slump forward, but in vajrasana the spine remains upright and straight quite naturally and without effort. It is the best meditation asana for those suffering from sciatica and sacral problems. The flow of prana takes place smoothly in this asana. In kundalini yoga vajrasana is practised for the awakening of sushumna nadi. It is for this reason that Sage Gheranda says that a yogi attains *siddhi*, perfection, by doing this asana.

6. SWASTIKASANA (auspicious pose)

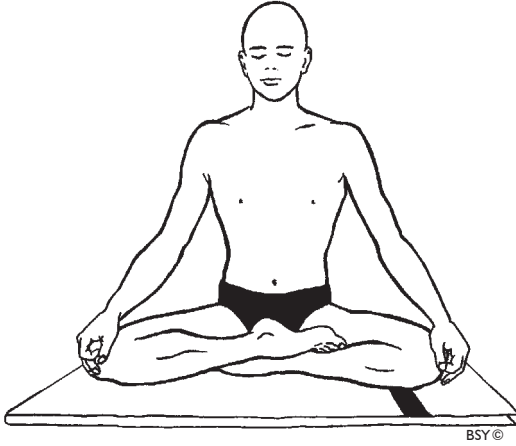
Verse 14

जानूर्वोर्न्तरे कृत्वा योगी पादतले उभे ।
ऋजुकायसमासीनः स्वस्तिकं तत्प्रचक्षते ॥ 14॥

*Jaanoorvorantare kritvaa yogee paadatale ubhe;
Rijukaayasamaaseenah svastikam tatprachakshate.*

Placing both the soles between the thighs and knees, adopt a triangular posture and sit with a balanced feeling. This is called swastikasana.

Swastikasana, the auspicious pose, is one of the main meditation asanas recommended by Sage Gheranda.



Technique

Sit with the legs stretched out in front of the body. Bending the left knee, place the sole of the left foot against the inside of the right thigh so that the heel does not touch the perineum. Bending the right knee, place the right foot over the left, as in bhadrasana. Grasp the toes of the left foot and pull them up into the

space between the right calf and thigh and place the right foot in the space between the left thigh and calf muscle. The toes of both feet remain pressed between the thighs and calves. The heels should not touch the groin. The knees should be firmly on the floor and the spine upright. Place the hands on the knees in chin or jnana mudra or rest them in the lap. Close the eyes and relax the whole body. Adjust the body to ensure that the asana is comfortable. This simple practice makes the body stable.

Contra-indications: This asana should not be performed by people suffering from sciatica and sacral infections.

Benefits: Swastikasana has the same benefits as the simple variation of siddhasana but at a reduced level, as the chakra locations are not directly stimulated. It is very useful for extended periods of sitting if one lacks the flexibility in the knees and ankles required for siddhasana.

Practice note: The main difference between the simple variation of siddhasana and swastikasana is that in siddhasana the heels remain one over the other and the feet are inserted between the thighs and calves. In swastikasana, only the toes are inserted and the heel does not exert pressure on the perineum. It could be said that swastikasana is a simplified variation of siddhasana. It is used as a stable asana for meditation.

7. SIMHASANA (lion pose)

Verses 15–16

गुल्फौ च वृषणस्याधो व्युत्क्रमेणोर्ध्वतां गतौ ।
चितियुग्मं भूमिसंस्थं करौ च जानुनोपरि ॥ 15 ॥
व्यात्तवक्त्रो जलन्ध्रेण नासाग्रमवलोकयेत् ।
सिंहासनं भवेदेतत्सर्वव्याधिविनाशकम् ॥ 16 ॥

*Gulphau cha vrishanasyaadho vyutkramenordhvataam gatau;
Chitiyugmam bhoomisamstham karau cha jaanunopari. (15)*

*Vyaattavaktro jalandhrena naasaagramavalokayet;
Simhaasanam bhavedetatsarvavyaadhivinaashakam. (16)*

Placing the upturned heels of both feet crosswise underneath the testes, have the knees on the ground, the hands on the knees and open the mouth. Perform jalandhara bandha, fixing the gaze at the eyebrow centre or at the nosetip. This asana by the name of simhasana eradicates all diseases.

Simhasana as described by Sage Gheranda is very similar to that described in *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (1:50–52) as one of the four most important meditation asanas. However, Yogi Swatmarama does not mention jalandhara bandha, instead specifying a hand mudra: “Place the ankles below the scrotum, right ankle on the left side, left ankle on the right side of the perineum. Place the palms on the knees, fingers spread apart, keep the mouth open and gaze at the nosetip with a concentrated mind. This is simhasana, held in great esteem by the highest yogis. This most excellent asana facilitates the three bandhas.”

For those who do not have sufficient flexibility for the full posture described by the sages, simhasana can be practised as follows.



Technique

Sit in vajrasana and separate the knees about 45–6 cm. The big toes of both feet should be touching each other. Leaning forward, place the palms of the hands on the floor between the knees, with the fingers pointing towards the body. Keep the arms absolutely straight and arch the back. The weight of the body should be supported by the arms.

Tilt the head back so that maximum expansion of the neck takes place and the throat remains open. Close the eyes and fix the inner gaze at the eyebrow centre, performing shambhavi mudra. Alternatively, the eyes can be kept open with the gaze turned towards the eyebrow centre or fixed on a point on the ceiling or in the sky. The mouth should be kept closed.

Breathing: Breathe normally in this asana.

Benefits: Pressure on the internal organs is redistributed. When the inner gaze is focused at the eyebrow centre, which has a relationship with the top of the spinal cord, the central nervous system is stimulated, influencing the core structures around the hypothalamic-limbic system. Alpha waves are generated in the optic system at the back of the head by closing the eyes. By crossing them in shambhavi mudra, these waves spread from the back

of the head to the frontal lobes, producing a profound meditative or relaxed state very quickly. According to the principles of reflexology, the strong pressure on the palms helps to relieve stress and tension, improve the blood supply, tone the nerves and balance the vital energy necessary for mastering meditation techniques.

Practice note: In this meditation asana the lion is sitting quietly, waiting for something to happen. This is the mental attitude the mind has to adopt in order to enter deep meditative states.

Variation with khechari mudra: As for the simple variation described above. Then, after performing shambhavi mudra, perform *khechari mudra*, i.e. keeping the mouth closed, fold the tongue backward so that the underside of the tip of the tongue presses lightly against the soft palate.

Breathing: Inhale slowly and deeply through the nose. At the end of inhalation, release the tongue, open the mouth and extend the tongue as far as possible.

SIMHAGARJANASANA (roaring lion variation)

Generally, simhasana is associated with the roaring lion pose. Simhagarjanasana is a very popular externalizing practice which releases a lot of stress and lightens the mood. The Upanishads classify it as a variation of simhasana.

Simple variation

Sitting in the simple variation of simhasana, open the eyes and gaze at the eyebrow centre (shambhavi mudra). The whole body should remain relaxed.

Breathing: *Stage 1* – Keeping the mouth closed, inhale slowly and deeply through the nose. At the end of inhalation open the mouth and extend the tongue as far as possible towards the chin. While exhaling slowly, produce a clear, steady roaring sound *aaaah* from the throat, keeping the



mouth wide open. At the end of exhalation, close the mouth and breathe in. This is one round.

Stage 2 – The verse says that jalandhara bandha should be practised, which implies breath retention, and the gaze fixed at the nosetip. To incorporate this in the roaring lion posture, inhale slowly through the nose and slowly exhale through the mouth with the *aaaah* sound. After making the sound, retain the breath outside and practise jalandhara bandha and nosetip gazing simultaneously.

Time of practice: In the yogic scriptures it says that simhasana is best done at sunrise, facing the sun with the mouth open so that the rays of the sun enter the throat. The sun's rays make the throat, tonsils, nerves and muscles of the throat healthy and strong. However, this asana may be performed at any time.

Duration: To maintain general health, practise five rounds daily. For healing a specific ailment, practise 10–20 rounds. The eyes, tongue and mouth may be relaxed for a few moments between each round.

Awareness: While inhaling, be aware of the breath. While exhaling, focus on the sound produced and the vibration in the throat area. Spiritually, the focus should be on vishuddhi or ajna chakra.

Precautions: Do not focus the eyes on the sun during the practice. The roaring sound should be sufficiently restrained so as not to strain the throat.

Do not practise Stage 2 of simhagarjanasana until comfortable with jalandhara bandha and kumbhaka as independent practices. Practise only with an experienced guide. The effect of the asana is no longer so light-hearted and extroverting due to the effect of kumbhaka and the force of nasikagra drishti.

Contra-indications: As for shambhavi mudra and nasikagra drishti. Kumbhaka should not be practised by people with high blood pressure, vertigo, heart problems or intra-cranial pressure.

Benefits: This is an excellent asana for the throat, nose, ears, eyes and mouth. Tension is removed from the chest and diaphragm. Simhagarjanasana is useful for people who stutter or who are nervous and introverted. It develops a strong and beautiful voice. Other benefits are as for shambhavi mudra.

Full practice

In the description of simhasana given by Sage Gheranda, the position of the feet under the perineum requires very flexible ankles, but does produce strong stimulation of the pelvic floor, raising the level of alertness and energy. Perhaps it is so strongly recommended as a meditation practice because it definitely wakes one up. The three bandhas mentioned in *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* are moola bandha, uddiyana bandha and jalandhara bandha. The pressure of the feet facilitates concentration at mooladhara. The inclusion of jalandhara bandha, as with siddhasana, suggests that one moves into deep states of meditation where the breathing rate slows and the spontaneous suspension of breath between inhalation and exhalation extends. Uddiyana bandha indicates that the exhalation (whether audible or not) is deep and extended, with the abdomen being drawn in towards the spine, assisting full exhalation.

In this asana the spine is extended and the body remains completely steady and alert. When the three bandhas occur spontaneously without any strain, as an expression of the state of mind, the healing and invigorating effects are profound. Sage Gheranda states that simhasana is beneficial for all disorders of the body.

8. GOMUKHASANA (cow's face pose)

Verse 17

पादौ च भूमौ संस्थाप्य पृष्ठपार्श्वे निवेशयेत् ।
स्थिरं कार्यं समासाद्य गोमुखं गोमुखाकृतिः ॥ 17॥

*Paadau cha bhoomau samsthaapya prishthapaarshve niveshayet;
Sthiram kaaryam samaasaadya gomukham gomukhaakritih.*

Placing both feet on the ground beside the buttocks, sitting upright with the body steady is gomukhasana, which resembles the face of a cow.

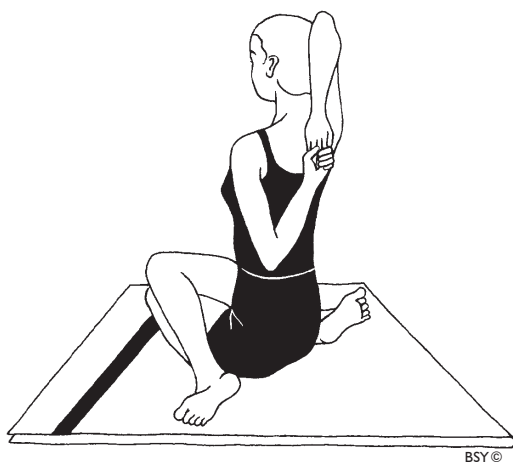
This is a relatively simple asana with many benefits.

Technique

Sit with both legs stretched out in front of the body. In this asana one has to sit with one leg over the other and both heels to the sides of the body. Place the right foot so that the right heel is near the left buttock. Then place the left foot so that the left heel is placed near the right buttock and the knees are one over the other (the left knee will be on top). The hands rest on top of the knees, one on top of the other.

Relax into the position and practise for as long as is comfortable.

The posture can also be practised with the limbs folded the other way, so that the right knee rests on top of



the left knee, in order to balance the body. This is gomukhasana as described by Sage Gheranda.

Benefits: This posture on its own is beneficial for disorders related to the reproductive organs. It is useful for men suffering from hydrocele. It is also recommended for women with a prolapsed uterus, as it squeezes the pelvic floor, thus supporting the uterus. It is a steady posture, facilitating meditation.

Variation: From the base position, wrap the right arm behind the back. Stretch the left arm above the head, keep the elbow pointing upward and bend the left arm so that the fingers of both hands can be clasped behind the back. The left elbow should be in line with the armpit. Some people say that the elbow should be just behind the head. Both variations are valid. The spine should be erect and the head back. Close the eyes.

In this position focus on nasikagra drishti and continue to sit for some time, breathing normally. At first, it may only be possible to stay in this asana for a few seconds, but with practice one can remain in the posture for at least one minute. The asana is then practised on the other side.

Breathing: It is important to remember that during the practice the breathing process should take place from

the abdomen, not from the chest. While inhaling, the abdomen is expanded; while exhaling, the abdomen is contracted.

Benefits: This practice has no contra-indications. It is an excellent asana for inducing relaxation. If practised for ten minutes or more, it will alleviate tiredness, tension and anxiety. It relieves backache, sciatica, rheumatism and general stiffness in the shoulders and neck, writer's cramp and other conditions of this region. It is particularly beneficial for spondylitis in the upper vertebral column. If the vertebral disc between the two vertebrae becomes displaced, it can help to normalize the situation. This simple practice strengthens the ligaments, removes cramps in the legs, removes stiffness from the feet and makes the leg and foot muscles supple. It improves posture by increasing energy and awareness.

The variation is beneficial for opening up the chest area, expanding the lungs and increasing the breathing capacity. Coughing, asthma, bronchitis, breathlessness or other respiratory diseases are alleviated.

Practice note: An important point to remember is that if the left knee is on top, the left elbow will point upwards. If the right knee is below, then the right hand will be wrapped behind the back.

9. VEERASANA (hero's pose)

Verse 18

एकं पादमथैकस्मिन्विन्यसेदूरुसंस्थितम् ।
इतरस्मिंस्तथा पश्चाद्वीरासनमितीरितम् ॥ 18 ॥

*Ekam paadamathaikasminvinvyasedoorusamsthitam;
Itarasmimstathaa pashchaadviraasanamiteeritam.*

Placing one foot near the thigh of the other leg and keeping the other foot at the back is called veerasana.

Once again, the modern variation has the same position for the legs as the basic asana. However, it also includes specific positions for the arms and head which help to keep the back straight.



Variation

Sit in vajrasana. Bend the right knee and place the right foot flat on the floor beside the inside of the left knee. Put the right elbow on the right knee and rest the chin on the palm of the right hand. Close the eyes and relax. Keep the body completely motionless. The spine and head remain straight. Repeat on the other side, with the

left foot placed beside the right knee. Do not strain, but aim to practise for a minimum of two minutes.

This asana may also be practised by sitting on the heel so that mooladhara chakra is stimulated.

Breathing: Veerasana with normal breathing is extremely effective for calming a person who is very excited and restless. To emphasize the calming effect, use the hand supporting the head to close the right nostril. The posture should be maintained for five minutes.

For meditative purposes, practise slow, deep breathing, imagining that the breath is flowing in and out of *bhrumadhya*, the eyebrow centre. Continue for as long as is comfortable.

Benefits: Those who have difficulty sitting in a meditative asana can practise meditation in this posture. When one leg becomes tired, change to the other side. Veerasana gives the benefits of vajrasana. Those who have difficulty sitting in vajrasana, due to tight thigh muscles, pain near the heels or in the knees, can perform veerasana. It is also good for the kidneys, liver, reproductive and abdominal organs.

Veerasana is useful for bringing the body into a comfortable position and then practising one-pointedness and focusing the mind. It is useful for those who think too much or who have uncontrollable or disturbed thoughts. The thinking process becomes very clear, precise and subtle. Veerasana balances the mind, increases the power of concentration, increases awareness of unconscious realms and induces physical and mental relaxation quickly.

10. DHANURASANA (bow pose)

Verse 19

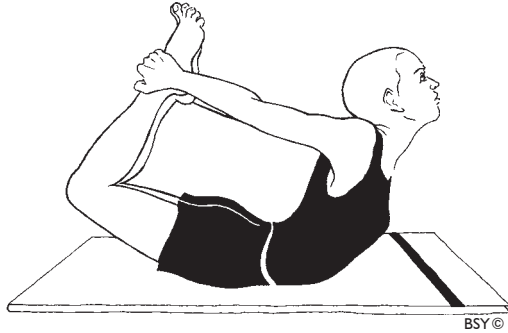
प्रसार्य पादौ भुवि दण्डरूपौ करौ च पृष्ठे धृतपादयुग्मम् ।
कृत्वा धनुर्वत्परिवर्तिताङ्गं निगद्यते वै धनुरासनं तत् ॥ 19॥

*Prasaarya paadau bhuvi dandaroopau karau cha prishthe
dhritapaadayugmam;*

*Kritvaa dhanurvatparivartitaangam nigadyate vai dhanur-
aasanam tat.*

Stretch both legs straight on the floor like sticks. Taking both hands towards the back, catch hold of both feet and let the body acquire the shape of a bow. According to yogis this is dhanurasana.

Again, dhanurasana is one of the asanas recommended in *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (1:25), where the description is even more laconic than Sage Gheranda's: "Holding the toes with the hands, pull them up to the ears as if drawing a bow. This is called dhanurasana."



Technique

Lie flat on the stomach with the legs straight and feet together, and the arms and hands beside the body. Bend the knees and bring the heels close to the buttocks.

Catch hold of the feet with the hands. Place the chin on the floor.

Hold the big toes in such a way that the thumbs point towards the soles of the feet while the fingers grip the toes. Tense the leg muscles and push the feet away from the body. Arch the back, lifting the thighs, chest and head together, pulling the feet as close to the head as possible without straining. Keep the arms straight.

In order to raise the body further, first bring the hands to shoulder level, then above shoulder level. The body should resemble a fully stretched bow. The body is to be tensed so that the hands, feet, spine, head and neck become hard and tight.

In the final position the head is tilted back and the abdomen supports the entire weight of the body. The only muscular contraction is in the legs. The back and arms remain relaxed. Hold the final position as long as is comfortable.

Slowly relax the leg muscles and lower the legs, chest and head to the starting position. Relax in the starting position until the breathing returns to normal. This is one round.

Variation: While in the position of dhanurasana, the body can be rocked to and fro on the abdomen.

Sequence: This asana should follow or precede a forward bending asana such as paschimottanasana.

Contra-indications: Do not practise dhanurasana if suffering from a weak heart, high blood pressure, hernia, colitis, peptic or duodenal ulcers. Dhanurasana should not be practised at night as it stimulates the adrenal glands and sympathetic nervous system.

Benefits: This asana reconditions the entire alimentary canal. When the body is rocked forward and backward, the liver, abdominal organs and muscles are massaged. The pancreas and adrenal glands are toned and their secretions balanced. The kidneys are massaged and excess weight is reduced around the abdominal

area. This leads to improved functioning of the digestive, excretory and reproductive organs and helps to remove gastrointestinal disorders, dyspepsia, chronic constipation and sluggishness of the liver.

The spinal column is realigned and the ligaments, muscles and nerves are activated, removing stiffness. Dhanurasana helps to correct hunching in the upper back. Easier variations are prescribed especially for the treatment of spinal disorders, such as slipped disc, spondylitis or sciatica.

Dhanurasana is recommended for the management of diabetes, incontinence, digestive disorders, menstrual disorders and, under special guidance, cervical spondylitis. It is helpful in regulating the functioning of the cervical and thoracic sympathetic nerves and improving respiration.

11. MRITASANA (death pose)

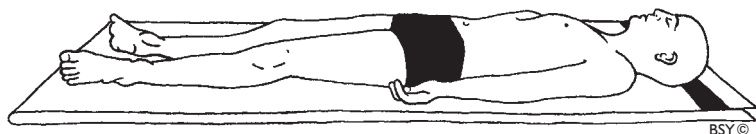
Verse 20

उत्तानं शववत् भूमौ शयनं तु शवासनम् ।
शवासनं श्रमहरं चित्तविश्रान्तिकारणम् ॥ 20 ॥

*Uttaanam shavavat bhoomau shayanam tu shavaasanam
Shavaasanam shramaharam chittavishraantikaaranam.*

Relax the whole body on the floor like a dead person.
Shavasana removes fatigue and relaxes the mind.

The more common name for mritasana is *shavasana*, the corpse pose. It is a very simple and deeply relaxing practice for most people and a meditation asana in its own right, if the practitioner remains awake.



Technique

Lie flat on the back. The body must be correctly positioned, as merely lying down is not shavasana. Normally, people lie down without being aware of the position of their feet or hands. The distance between the feet should be equal to the width of the waist. If the waist is 30 cm wide, the distance between the feet should also be 30 cm. The arms should be about 15 cm away from the body. The palms should be open and facing upward, allowing the fingers to curl slightly.

Having the palms facing upward may feel awkward at first, or there may be some discomfort due to twisting of the wrists, but gradually with practice this asana becomes very comfortable. One reason it is so relaxing is that very little sensation is felt in the backs of the hands as there are very few sensory nerve fibres in that part of the body. In contrast, the palms of the hands are very sensitive as many sensory nerve endings are located there and transmit sensory stimuli to the brain. When the palms face up, sensory stimulation is reduced. For this reason, it is recommended that the palms are kept open and facing upward.

The mouth should remain closed, with the lower jaw relaxed. All tension should be released from the face. A thin pillow or folded blanket can be placed under the head and, if necessary, underneath the shoulders to help relax both the shoulders and the throat muscles. The head and spine remain in one straight line. The head should not be tilted to the right or the left. All physical movements should cease after establishing the position, and the body is relaxed.

Become aware of the normal breath, letting it become rhythmic and relaxed. Become aware of the parts of the body which are in contact with the floor. If thoughts come during the practice, do not try to suppress them.

Variation: The practice can be deepened by rotating the consciousness around the different parts of the body and relaxing each one in turn. While lying in shavasana, become aware of the right hand and relax it. Slowly become aware of the right wrist, elbow, armpit, right side of the waist, right buttock, right thigh, right knee, calf, heel, sole of the foot, and relax them one by one. Repeat this process on the left side of the body and for all the parts of the head and trunk. Make sure that each part of the body is relaxed, and feel each part merging into the floor. Repeat this process a few times and all tension will be removed.

Awareness: There should be no physical movement in shavasana. Once the body is settled, awareness of the asana should be maintained, otherwise the desire for sleep will take over and harmony between body and mind will be lost. Awareness and stability are the main components of shavasana. Even a small movement means contracting the muscles, which disturbs the stillness of shavasana. This awareness requires a little mental effort, but it should be without tension. Sleeping in shavasana will reduce many of its benefits, as during sleep the mind is again filled with worries. To obtain maximum physical and mental relaxation, shavasana should be practised with full awareness.

There are various methods to become one-pointed, focused and to go deeply into shavasana. Initially, simply be aware of the body or focus the mind on the breathing. Another technique is to count the breaths, or to do a short practice of yoga nidra in shavasana. All methods of focusing oneself are valid, but the final state or culmination of shavasana is yoga nidra.

Duration: Practise according to the amount of time available.

In general, the longer the better; however, a minute or two is sufficient between asana practices.

Sequence: Shavasana should be practised between asanas, especially dynamic asanas such as surya namaskara. It should be done regularly several times a day by people suffering from high blood pressure, nervous disorders, diabetes, heart disease and other stress-induced diseases. Shavasana can also be practised prior to sleeping.

Benefits: This asana relaxes the whole psychophysiological system. It cures ailments caused by tension by making the body and mind peaceful and relaxed. Physical and mental tiredness are removed. It should be practised if the body is over-stimulated or excited, or whenever tiredness is experienced after practising other asanas. Shavasana develops body awareness, and when the body is completely relaxed, awareness of the mind increases, developing pratyahara. The mind will remain peaceful and without worries even in the most difficult situations if this practice can be mastered.

12. GUPTASANA (secret pose)

Verse 21

जानूर्वोरन्तरे पादौ कृत्वा पादौ च गोपयेत् ।
पादापरि च संस्थाप्य गुदं गुप्तासनं विदुः ॥ 21 ॥

*Jaanoorvorantare paadau kritvaa paadau cha gopayet;
Paadopari cha samsthaapya gudam guptaasanam viduh.*

Keep both feet hidden in the middle portion of both the knees and bring the anal region between the feet. This is called guptasana.

In this asana an effort is made to keep the toes, heels and calves hidden under the thighs. For this reason it is called



guptasana. *Gupta* means secret. The feet are placed between the thigh and calf muscles so that the foot presses the anus.

It can be said that this is a variation of siddhasana or siddha yoni asana. To a great extent it shares the benefits of siddhasana, and for some people is easier to practise.

13. MATSYASANA (fish pose)

Verse 22

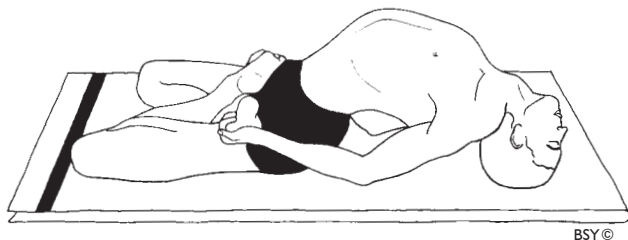
मुक्तपद्मासनं कृत्वा उत्तानशयनं चरेत् ।
कूर्पराभ्यां शिरो वेष्ट्यं रोगघ्नं मात्स्यमासनम् ॥ 22 ॥

*Muktapadmaasanam kritvaa uttaanashayanam charet;
Koorparaabhyaam shiro veshtyam rogaghnam maatsyamaasanam.*

In the position of mukta padmasana bring the elbows of both hands around the head and lie flat on the floor. This destroyer of diseases is called matsyasana.

The asana, generally known as baddha padmasana, was described by Sage Gheranda as padmasana in the second verse. When he refers here to mukta padmasana, it indicates

that the arms are not locked behind the back. It is usually thought of as the 'normal' padmasana. This is the starting position.



Variation 1

Sitting in padmasana, bend backwards, leaning on the elbows for support, arching the upper back and neck as the crown of the head is lowered to the floor. The elbows remain pressed against the floor at the side of the body. The legs and thighs rest on the floor in the position of padmasana, and the spine is in an arched position like a bridge. The crown of the head is in contact with the floor. Adjust the position of the head to maximize the arch in the back. To begin with, the elbows help to support the weight of the body.

Relax the arms and the whole body, allowing the head, buttocks and legs to support the weight of the body. Close the eyes and breathe slowly and deeply. Return to the starting position, reversing the order of movements. Repeat the asana, with the legs crossed the other way.

Full practice

The asana as described by Sage Gheranda requires greater flexibility. The starting position is the same. Then, if Variation 1 can be held comfortably without strain, gently release the back on to the floor. Instead of the weight of the body being supported on the crown of the head, it is distributed to those parts of the back

in contact with the floor and the buttocks and to some extent the legs, which remain folded into padmasana. The elbows are folded around the head, opening the chest and shoulders. The back of the head rests on the floor.

Breathing: In the final position the breathing is slow and deep. Experience the breath in the abdomen. Practising sheetkari pranayama in the final position makes the voice sweet and steady.

Duration: The final position can be held for up to five minutes. For general health purposes, one to three minutes is adequate.

Awareness: Physically, on the abdomen, chest, neck, head and breath. For spiritual purposes, the point of concentration is vishuddhi chakra, where the mind is fixed for meditation.

Sequence: Halasana, vipareeta karani asana or sarvangasana are the ideal counterposes for matsyasana as they stretch the neck in the opposite direction, releasing any muscular tension.

Contra-indications: People who suffer from heart disease, peptic ulcers, hernia, back conditions or any serious illness should not practise this asana. It should not be attempted during pregnancy.

Benefits: This asana stretches the intestines and tones the abdominal organs and is useful for all abdominal ailments. It also relieves inflamed and bleeding piles. In hatha yoga it has been suggested as a practice to relieve constipation. Drink two or three glasses of water and remain in the asana for as long as possible.

The pelvic region is given a good stretch and the pressure of the feet on the thighs greatly reduces blood circulation in the legs, diverting it to the pelvic organs. This asana helps to prevent and remove disorders of the reproductive system. If practised prior to pregnancy, it can also help alleviate pain in the lower back which may be experienced during pregnancy. This asana re-

circulates stagnant blood in the back. Cervical spondylitis and stress in the lower back are relieved.

With this practice, expansion of the lungs and deep respiration take place, alleviating disorders such as asthma, bronchitis or kapha dosha imbalances. When the neck is swollen, especially in tonsillitis, massaging the neck in this position helps to remove the swelling. The function of the thyroid gland is regulated and the thymus gland stimulated, boosting the immune system. Youthfulness and vitality are increased.

Although the full practice of this asana requires greater flexibility, once achieved it can be held for long periods of time without strain, giving a feeling of openness to meditation practice.

Practice note: It is important that the body is slowly lowered into and raised from the final position by using the elbows as a support. The movement should be performed with control and care as the spine is easily injured by sudden, jerking movements.

14. MATSYENDRASANA (Yogi Matsyendranath's pose)

Verses 23–24

उदरं पश्चिमाभासं कृत्वा तिष्ठत्ययत्नतः ।
नम्रितं वामपादं हि दक्षजानूपरि न्यसेत् ॥23॥
तत्र याम्यं कूर्परं च वक्त्रं याम्यकरेऽपि च ।
भ्रुवोर्मध्ये गता दृष्टिः पीठं मात्स्येन्द्रमुच्यते ॥24॥

*Udaram pashchimaabhaasam kritvaa tishthatyayatnatah;
Namritam vaamapaadam hi dakshajanoopari nyaset. (23)*

*Tatra yaamyam koorparam cha vaktram yaamyakare'pi cha;
Bhruvormadhye gataa drishtih peetham maatsyendramuchyate. (24)*

Pull the abdomen towards the back, keeping the back straight. Bend the left leg with effort, placing the heel

over the right thigh. Support the right elbow on the leg. Placing the chin on the right hand, fix the gaze at the eyebrow centre. This is known as matsyendrasana.

Sage Gheranda does not give any specific health benefits for this asana, which was the preferred meditation posture for the great yogi Matsyendranath. This is probably because the main purpose of the variation he presents is to induce meditation for those who are sufficiently flexible to relax deeply in the posture.

However, this is also one of the asanas recommended by Yogi Swatmarama in *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (1:26–27). His description corresponds most closely to the preparatory pose generally known as ardha matsyendrasana. Therefore, he gives some benefits as his variation has therapeutic consequences at many levels: “Place the right foot at the base of the left thigh, the left foot at the side of the right knee. Take hold of the left foot with the right hand, pass the left arm behind the waist and remain with the body turned. This asana is described by Sri Matsyendranath. Practising this asana increases the digestive fire to such an incredible capacity that it is the means of removing diseases, and thus awakening the serpent power and bringing equilibrium in the bindu.”

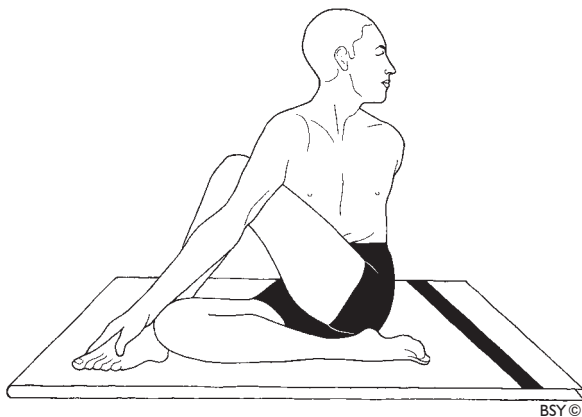
Variation 1: Ardha Matsyendrasana (half matsyendrasana)

Sit with the legs stretched out in front of the body. Bend the right leg and place the right foot flat on the floor on the outside of the left knee. The toes of the right foot should face forward. Bend the left leg and bring the heel around to the right buttock. The outside edge of the left foot remains in contact with the floor with the sole of the foot facing back. The left arm is then passed through the space between the chest and the right knee, and placed against the outside of the right leg. This will create some tension in the body.

Pressing the knee towards the body with the elbow, hold the right foot or ankle with the left hand, so that the

right knee is close to the left armpit. Slowly twist to the right, simultaneously moving the right arm, the trunk and the head. The head should not be lowered. Use the left arm as a lever against the right leg to twist the trunk without using the back muscles.

Look over the right shoulder. Do not strain the back. Bend the right elbow and place the arm around the back of the waist. The back of the right hand should wrap around the left side of the waist. Alternatively, the hand can be placed as high as possible between the shoulder blades with the fingers pointing up. This arm position helps to keep the spine straight.

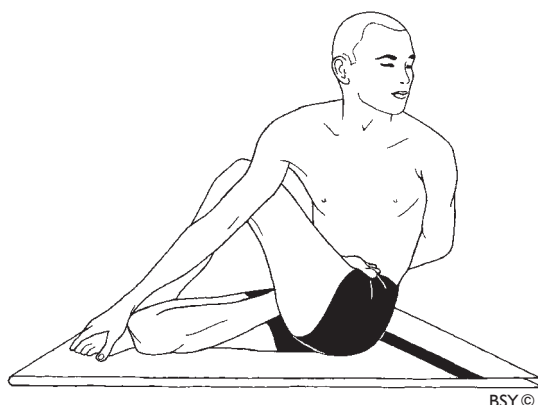


Variation 2: Poorna Matsyendrasana (full matsyendrasana)

Poorna matsyendrasana is normally thought of as the full version of the asana. The only difference is that instead of keeping the back foot on the floor, it is placed on top of the thigh as in ardha padmasana (Refer to *Asana Pranayama Mudra Bandha* by Swami Satyananda).

Sit with the legs outstretched. Bend the right leg, placing it on the left thigh. Bend the left leg, placing the foot on the outside of the right knee with the sole of the foot on the floor. The foot which was on the floor beside

the buttock in ardha matsyendrasana, is now resting on top of the thigh. The position of the arms and hands remains the same as in ardha matsyendrasana. In this position the heel exerts a lot of pressure on the liver and the bladder.



Full practice: Matsyendrasana

The full practice as described by Sage Gheranda is half way in difficulty between ardha and poorna matsyendrasana. The legs are positioned as for poorna matsyendrasana, but rather than using the arms to lock the torso into a twist, the head rests on one hand with the elbow supported on the knee.

Whilst in this asana the instruction is, *bhruvormadhyegataa drishti*, focus the gaze at the eyebrow centre. Remain in the position for some time, breathing normally. It can then be practised on the other side in the same way.

Breathing: Inhale in the starting position. Exhale while twisting the trunk. Breathe slowly and deeply without strain in the final position. Inhale while returning to the starting position.

Duration: Practise once on each side, gradually increasing the holding time to one or two minutes on each side of the body or for up to 30 breaths. The full posture can be held by adepts for as long as comfortable without

straining. It is said that Yogi Matsyendranath used to meditate in this asana exclusively and that's why it is named after him.

Awareness: Physically, on keeping the spine straight and on the movement of the abdomen created by the breath in the final position. Spiritually, the concentration is on ajna chakra, which is facilitated in Sage Gheranda's version by gazing at the eyebrow centre.

Sequence: Ardha or poorna matsyendrasana are best performed after completing a series of forward and backward bending asanas.

Precautions: People with sciatica or slipped disc may benefit from ardha matsyendrasana, but they should do this practice with great care and only under expert guidance.

Contra-indications: Pregnant women should avoid this practice. People suffering from peptic ulcer, hernia or hyperthyroidism should only practise it under expert guidance. People suffering from heart disease should not do this practice, as it exerts excessive pressure on the arteries and capillaries originating from the heart. It should not be practised by those with sciatica or slipped disc.

Benefits: This posture simultaneously stretches the muscles on one side of the back and abdomen while contracting the muscles on the other side. It tones the nerves of the spine, makes the back muscles supple, relieves lumbago and muscular spasms, and reduces the tendency of the adjoining vertebrae to develop inflammatory problems and calcium deposits.

It massages the abdominal organs, alleviating digestive ailments. It also regulates the secretions of the adrenal glands, liver and pancreas, and is beneficial for the kidneys. It is used in the management of diabetes, being a time-tested treatment for stimulating insulin production by activating the pancreas.

Under expert guidance it is used in the yogic management of sinusitis, hay fever, bronchitis, constipation,

colitis, menstrual disorders, urinary tract disorders and cervical spondylitis, as long as it can be performed without any discomfort.

15. GORAKSHASANA (Yogi Gorakhnath's pose)

Verses 25–26

जानूर्वोरन्तरे पादौ उत्तानौ व्यक्तसंस्थितौ ।
गुल्फौ चाच्छाद्य हस्ताभ्यामुत्तानाभ्यां प्रयत्नतः ॥ 25 ॥
कण्ठसंकोचनं कृत्वा नासाग्रमवलोकयेत् ।
गोरक्षासनमित्याहुर्योगिनां सिद्धिकारणम् ॥ 26 ॥

*Jaanoorvorantare paadau uttaanau vyaktasamsthitau;
Gulphau chaachchhaadya hastaabhyaamuttaanaabhyaam
prayatnatah. (25)*

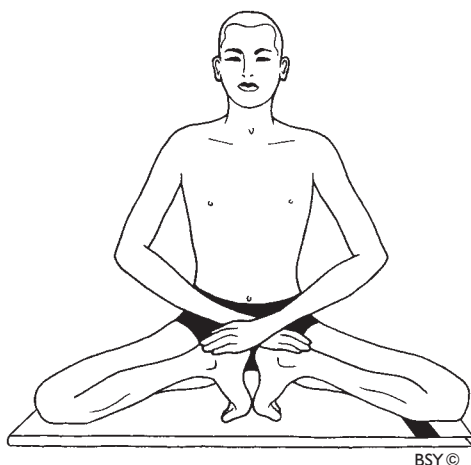
*Kanthasankochanam kritvaa naasaagramavalokayet;
Gorakshaasanamityaahuryoginaam siddhikaaranam. (26)*

Keep the toes of both the feet in a hidden manner in the middle of both thighs and knees. Holding both heels with both hands, contract the throat and fix the gaze at the nosetip. This gorakshasana enables yogis to attain siddhi.

Technique

Sit with the legs outstretched in front of the body. Bend the knees, take hold of the feet and place the soles together. Draw the heels up to the perineum. Raise the heels. Keep the knees and the toes on the floor. In this position the groin region, buttocks and reproductive organs remain behind the heels. Place the hands behind the buttocks, fingers pointing backward and lever the body forward until the feet become vertical.

Cross the wrists in front of the navel. Hold the left heel with the right hand and the right heel with the left hand. Straighten the spine and look forward.



BSY ©

In this position jalandhara bandha and nasikagra drishti are also performed. Hold for as long as is comfortable.

Breathing: Breathe normally throughout the practice.

Awareness: There are two centres for concentration in this asana: mooladhara and vishuddhi. In the beginning, meditation is on mooladhara, but once the ability to sit comfortably in the position for a longer period is developed, the mind should be focused on vishuddhi chakra.

Precautions: Only healthy people with strong and flexible legs and feet should attempt this asana.

Contra-indications: It is not suitable during pregnancy.

Benefits: By practising this asana, control over the reproductive organs, sexual desire and discharge of semen is achieved. It makes the legs and feet extremely supple. The process of concentration on the throat helps to eliminate many diseases. This asana is also practised in order to focus the mind and to achieve a state of concentration.

The flow of prana is reversed and directed upward to the higher centres for use in meditative states. In fact gorakhasana is a practice for meditation. When the

eyes remain closed during the practice, meditation is on the symbol. The mind immediately becomes one-pointed, as the state of the body means that the mind does not waver at all. If nasikagra drishti is practised, the mind is left with no alternative but to become focused on the nosetip, which stimulates mooladhara chakra.

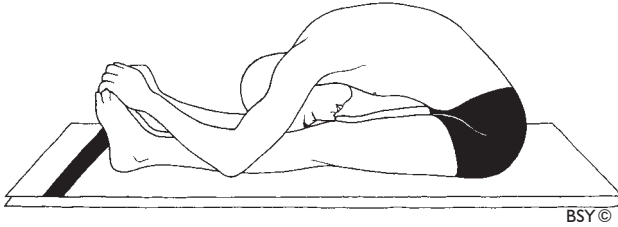
16. PASCHIMOTTANASANA (back stretching pose)

Verse 27

प्रसार्य पादौ भुवि दण्डरूपौ विन्यस्तभालं चितियुग्ममध्ये ।
यत्नेन पादौ च धृतौ कराभ्यां तत्पश्चिमोत्तानमिहासनं स्यात् ॥ 27 ॥

*Prasaarya paadau bhuvi dandaroopau vinyastabhaalam
chitiyugmamadhye;
Yatnena paadau cha dhritau karaabhyaam tatpashchimottaan-
amihaasanam syaat.*

Stretch both legs out, like a staff, on the ground in a natural way and grasp the big toes. Then place the head between the knees. Thus it becomes paschimottanasana.



Paschimottanasana: Full practice

Sit with the legs stretched out in front of the body, feet together and the hands on the knees. This is the starting position.

Straighten the spine, then relax the whole body. Sliding the hands down the legs, slowly bend forward from the hips as far as possible without forcing or jerking. Grasp the big toes with the fingers and thumbs. If this is impossible, hold the ankles, shins or any part of the legs that can be reached comfortably. Keep the feet close to each other. Do not bend the knees.

Hold the position for a few seconds. Relax the back and leg muscles, allowing them to loosen into the stretch. Keeping the legs straight and using the arm muscles, not the back muscles, begin to bend the elbows and gently bring the trunk down towards the legs as far as is comfortable, maintaining a firm grip on the toes, feet or legs. The aim is to eventually touch the forehead to the knees, but do not strain.

Hold the final position for as long as is comfortable and relax the body. Slowly return to the starting position. This is one round.

Breathing: Inhale while straightening the spine in the starting position. Exhale slowly while bending forward. Inhale in the static position. Exhale while bringing the trunk further towards the legs. Inhale while returning to the starting position. Adeptes who can hold the full pose comfortably can breathe slowly and deeply in the final position.

Variation I

Sit with the legs stretched out in front of the body. Raise the arms above the head while straightening the spine. Bend the trunk forward from the hips as in the basic practice, so that the hands are stretched towards the toes. Hold the final position for a short time.

Breathing: Inhale in the starting position while raising the hands. Exhale slowly while bending forward. Retain the breath outside in the final position, or breathe normally if holding for more than a few seconds. Inhale while returning to the starting position.

Variation 2

To give this practice a dynamic form, first lie on the back with the feet together. Stretch the arms along the floor beyond the head like an extension of the spine, with the palms facing up. This is the starting position.

Raise the trunk to the sitting position, keeping the arms straight above the head and the spine straight. Bend forward from the hips, again keeping the body and arms straight. Hold the posture as long as is comfortable. Return to the sitting position, keeping the arms straight above the head. Lie down in shavasana. This is one round.

Breathing: Breathe normally in the starting position. Inhale while coming into the sitting position. Exhale slowly while bending forward. Retain the breath outside in the final position, or breathe normally if holding for more than a few seconds. Inhale while returning to the sitting position. Exhale while returning to the starting position.

Duration: The basic practice can be performed up to five times, staying in the final position for only a short length of time. Adept may maintain the final position for up to five minutes.

Awareness: The point of concentration varies according to the flexibility of the body. Be aware of swadhisthana chakra or manipura chakra.

Sequence: This asana should follow or precede a backward bending asana such as bhujangasana or matsyasana.

Precautions: Do not force the body to bend forward as it is easy to strain the back. Flexibility comes gradually with practice over a period of time. The variations are both more strenuous than the basic practice and require greater strength in the spine and abdominal muscles.

Contra-indications: People suffering from sciatica, slipped disc, spondylitis, hernia, high blood pressure or heart disease should not perform this asana. It is not suitable during pregnancy.

Benefits: Paschimottanasana stretches the hamstring muscles and increases flexibility in the hip joints. It tones and massages the entire abdominal and pelvic region, including the liver, pancreas, spleen, uro-genital system, kidneys and adrenal glands. This asana is especially recommended to make the abdomen and waist supple and to remove excess weight in this area. Circulation to the nerves and muscles of the spine is stimulated. Under expert guidance it may be used to relieve lumbar lordosis, a forward curving of the spine found in the lower back (sway back) or neck. It is a good practice to straighten the spine, which is fully stretched during this practice.

Paschimottanasana is used in the management of prolapse, menstrual disorders, sluggish liver, diabetes, colitis, kidney complaints, eosinophilia, asthma, bronchitis and other respiratory diseases.

17. UTKATASANA (pose for difficulties)

Verse 28

अङ्गुष्ठाभ्यामवष्टभ्य धरां गुल्फौ च खे गतौ ।
तत्रोपरि गुदं न्यस्य विज्ञेयं तूत्कटासनम् ॥28॥

*Angushthaabhyamavashtabhya dharaam gulphau cha khe gatau;
Tatropari gudam nyasya vijneyam tootkataasanam.*

Keeping the big toes of the feet on the floor, sit with their support without letting the heels touch the floor and place the anal region on the heels. This will be known as utkatasana.

Utkat means difficulty, strength or intensity. This asana was named utkatasana because readiness to respond to a situation is displayed in this posture. During anxious moments one may sit like this in order to be able to get up

immediately when required. The first variation is used in the strengthening practice of nauli.

Variation I

Normally utkatasana is practised as follows. Stand upright with the feet separated up to a shoulder width apart and the weight balanced equally on the feet. Keep standing, but bend the knees and bend forward enough to place the hands on the thighs just above the knees. This is the simplest method.



Full posture

The final position is different, though it is also very simple. Keep the legs closer together, about waist width apart, and balance on the toes. Hold this position, then spread the knees and sit on the heels. Squat with the knees apart, keeping the hands on the knees. The weight of the body is supported by the toes only and the heels press the anus.

Precautions: Physical balance needs to be kept in mind during this practice, as the body could be hurt by falling either forward or backward.

Contra-indications: Although this is a very simple asana, it should not be practised by people with ankle or knee problems.

Benefits: Utkatasana is one of the balancing group of asanas used to perfect physical balance. It strengthens the thigh muscles.

18. SANKATASANA (pose for trouble)

Verse 29

वामपादचितेर्मूलं विन्यस्य धरणीतले ।
पाद दण्डेनयाम्येन वेष्टयेद्द्वामपादकम् ।
जानुयुग्मे करयुग्मेतत्संकटासनम् ॥ 29 ॥

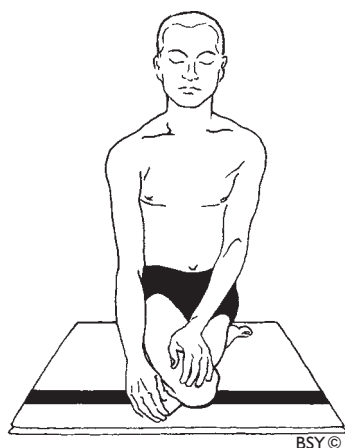
*Vaamapaadachitermoolam vinyasya dharaneetale;
Paada dandenayamyena veshtayedvaamapaadakam;
Jaanuyugme karayugmetatsankataasanam.*

Keeping the part of the left leg below the knee on the floor, wrap the right leg around the left leg and then place both hands on the knees. This is called sankatasana.

Sankat means difficulty, trouble or danger. For those not comfortable in vajrasana, it is a difficult asana. However, for those who find it comfortable, this posture conserves energy and gives a heightened state of alertness.

Technique

Kneel on the floor and relax the feet. Keep the shin of the left leg on the floor, bend the right knee and wrap the right leg around the left leg. The right thigh rests on top of the left thigh. Sit down on the left heel. Place the hands on the knees. Hold as long as is comfortable and then practise on the other side.



BSY ©

Contra-indications: Sankatasana is not recommended if suffering from knee or ankle problems, varicose veins, or during pregnancy.

Awareness: Focusing the gaze on a definite point, keep the awareness fixed on the maintenance of physical balance. The point of concentration, stimulated by the pressure of the heel, is mooladhara chakra.

Benefits: This asana makes the muscles strong, the nerves healthy and the joints of the legs supple.

19. MAYURASANA (peacock pose)

Verse 30

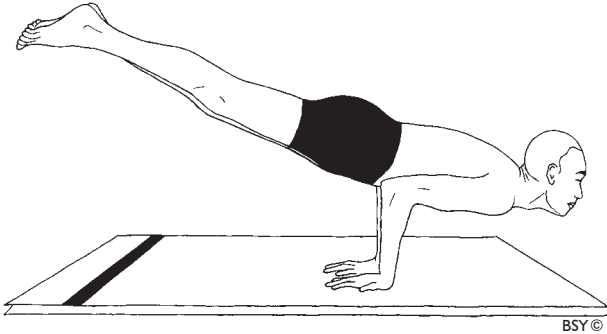
पाण्योस्तलाभ्यामवलम्ब्य भूमिं तत्कूर्परस्थापितनाभिपार्श्वम् ।
उच्चासनो दण्डवदुत्थितः खे मायूरमेतत्प्रवदन्ति पीठम् ॥ 30 ॥

*Paanyostalaabhyaamavalambya bhoomim tatkoorparasthaapitan-
aabhipaarshvam;*

*Uchchaasano dandavadutthitah khe maayoorametatpravadanti
peetham.*

Keeping the palms of both hands firmly on the floor, place both elbows to the rear on each side of the navel. Then raise both the legs and body like a stick (horizontal). This is called mayurasana.

It is recommended that mayurasana be used primarily by those who are already fit and healthy to increase strength, purity and balance. It is a difficult asana, requiring mental balance and physical strength, and is not generally suitable for people who are suffering from illness or weakness.



Technique

Sit in vajrasana. Place the feet together and separate the knees. Lean forward and place both palms between the knees on the floor with the fingers pointing towards

the feet. The position of the hands can be adjusted according to comfort and flexibility. To achieve the initial posture, bring the elbows and forearms together close to the navel and lean forward resting the abdomen on the elbows and the chest on the upper arms. Stretch the legs backward so that they are straight, with the feet together and the tips of the toes resting on the floor. The practice of mayurasana is quite simple to this point.

Then tense the muscles of the body and, raising the feet, slowly elevate the trunk and legs so that they are horizontal to the floor. Only a few people can do this comfortably, because the body is balanced on the palms of the hands in this position and there is considerable pressure on the abdominal area from the elbows and upper arms. Also, to elevate the legs and feet higher while keeping them straight requires applying more muscular effort while simultaneously adjusting the balance of the body. Do not strain.

In the final position the weight of the body should be supported by the muscles of the abdomen, not the chest. Hold the breath for as long as is comfortable and then return to the base position, slowly bringing the head in line with the body. This is one round.

When the breathing rate has returned to normal, a second round may be attempted. It becomes possible to raise the legs higher as the practice is perfected.

Breathing: Exhale while raising the body from the floor. Inhale while lowering the body back to the floor. To begin with, hold the breath out in the final position. Advanced practitioners may breathe slowly and deeply in the pose.

Duration: Practise up to three rounds. In the beginning, this asana should be held for a few seconds, slowly increasing the duration with practice. Adepts may hold the final position for a few minutes.

Sequence: Perform at the end of an asana session. Mayurasana quite vigorously speeds up the circulation and

tends to temporarily increase the amount of toxins in the blood as part of the purification process. Therefore, it should never be practised before any inverted asana as it may direct excess toxins to the brain.

Precautions: This asana should never be practised immediately after meals. It is very easy to fall forward from the final position, so be careful and, if necessary, place a small cushion on the floor under the face.

Contra-indications: Mayurasana should not be practised by people with high blood pressure or any heart ailments, hernia or ulcers. If this asana is practised when a wind disorder is present, the air may rise upward and during breath retention, the retained wind could cause pain to develop in the chest. Mayurasana can only be performed by those who already have flexibility, physical self-control and balance. This pose should not be attempted if there is any sign of illness or physical weakness. This practice is not advised during menstruation. Pregnant women are strongly advised not to practise this asana.

Benefits: This asana stimulates the metabolic processes which increase secretions from different glands. Blood circulation is stimulated, thereby helping to purify the blood and in turn the whole body. It stimulates the elimination of toxins from the blood, assisting the removal of skin conditions such as boils. The entire weight of the body is supported by the elbows, which press the navel region inward, influencing the kidneys, bladder, liver, intestines, stomach and the nervous system. All the digestive organs are massaged and intestinal peristalsis is stimulated. This asana is useful in managing flatulence, constipation, diabetes and sluggishness of the liver and kidneys. It enhances the efficacy of the internal organs and harmonizes the glands of the endocrine system.

Mayurasana develops mental and physical balance, strengthens the muscles of the whole body and develops muscular control. In particular, toxins accumulated in

the body are burnt, bringing the three doshas: wind, phlegm and bile, (vata, kapha and pitta) into balance and harmony.

People who are advised to speed up the purification processes of the body and eliminate toxins should prepare for this practice by observing the following instructions. Eliminate milk products, meat, fat, spices, adulterated foods and any other foods which are difficult to digest from the diet. For one month take fruit, vegetables, rice, whole wheat chapattis or bread, buttermilk and other simple foods which are easy to digest. After two weeks of this restricted diet, begin to practise mayurasana. Within a month the entire system should be purified, both internally and externally.

If there is no marked improvement, continue the diet and the practice of mayurasana for another few weeks.

Practice note: As women have a different muscular system to men in the abdomen and chest areas, they may find mayurasana difficult to perform.

20. KUKKUTASANA (cockrel pose)

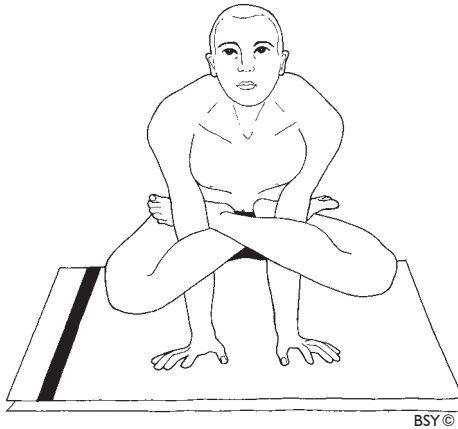
Verse 31

पद्मासनं समासाद्य जानूर्वोरन्तरे करौ ।
कूर्पराभ्यां समासीनो उच्चस्थः कुक्कुटासनम् ॥ 31 ॥

*Padmaasanam samaasaadya jaanoorvorantare karau;
Koorparaabhyaam samaaseeno uchchasthah kukkutaasanam.*

Sit in padmasana. Insert the hands between the thighs and calves and place them on the floor. Placing the palms of the hands firmly on the floor, raise the body from the floor. The body will be supported on the elbows. It is called kukkutasana.

Kukkut means a cock or cockerel. In this asana the physical posture is similar to that of a cockerel. That is why it is called kukkutasana.



Technique

Sit in padmasana. Insert the hands between the calves and thighs, near the knees. Gradually push the arms through the legs up to the elbows. Place the palms of the hands firmly on the floor with the fingers pointing forward. Keeping the head straight and the eyes fixed on a point in front, while maintaining padmasana, raise the body from the floor to elbow height, balancing only on the hands. Hold the back straight. Remain in the final position for as long as is comfortable.

Return to the floor and slowly release and relax the arms, hands and legs. Change the leg position and repeat the pose.

Breathing: Inhale, then hold the breath while raising the body. Breathe normally in the final position. Exhale while lowering the body.

Awareness: Keep the awareness focused on the breath in the nostrils or on maintaining balance. For spiritual purposes, concentrate on mooladhara chakra.

Precautions: The arms and wrists must be strong enough to support the body.

Contra-indications: As this is a strenuous asana and requires good balance, it is not suitable for people with heart conditions, high blood pressure, prolapse, hernia, back pain or vertigo. It is not advised during menstruation or pregnancy.

Benefits: This asana strengthens the arm and shoulder muscles and stretches the chest. It loosens up the legs and develops a sense of balance and stability. Some people can raise the body up to armpit level. It is especially beneficial for alleviating diseases affecting the shoulders, arms, chest and lungs. There is an automatic contraction in the perineum which helps to tone the muscles there. It is used in the process of kundalini awakening due to the stimulation of mooladhara chakra.

Practice note: If oil is applied to the legs, it is easier to slip the arms between the thighs and calves, particularly for those who have a lot of hair on the legs or a lot of fat or muscle on the legs.

21. KOORMASANA (tortoise pose)

Verse 32

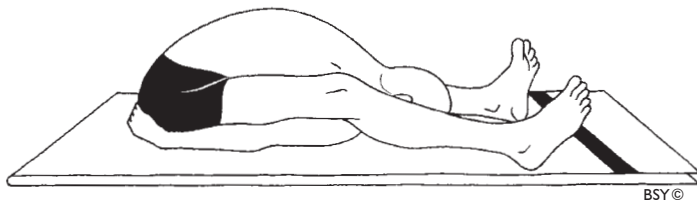
गुल्फौ च वृषणस्याधो व्युत्क्रमेण समाहितौ ।
ऋजुकायशिरोग्रीवं कूर्मासनमितीरितम् ॥ ३२ ॥

*Gulphau cha vrishanasyaadho vyutkramena samaahitau;
Rijukaayashirogreevam koormasanamiteeritam.*

Placing both heels underneath the testes in opposite directions and sitting with the body, head and neck straight and in line is called koormasana.

Koorma means tortoise. It will be noticed that only the hands and feet of a tortoise protrude from its shell. The technique

of koormasana as described by Sage Gheranda is quite different from the normal koormasana variation practised today, where the curve of the back as it bends forward shapes the body like that of a tortoise. The well-known variation of koormasana is practised as follows.



Variation I

Sit on the ground with the legs outstretched. Separate the feet as wide apart as is comfortable. Bend the knees slightly, keeping the heels in contact with the floor. Lean forward from the hips and place the hands under the knees, palms facing either up or down. Lean further forward and slowly slide the arms under the legs. The knees may be bent more if necessary. Slide the arms sideways and backward until the elbows lie on the outside of the thighs between the knees and the buttocks. Do not tense the back muscles.

Slowly push the heels forward and straighten the legs as far as possible without straining. The body will automatically bend further forward. Gradually, keeping the awareness on the breath and relaxation, move the body forward until the forehead or chin touches the floor between the legs. Do not force or strain in any way. Fold the arms around the back and interlock the fingers of both hands under the buttocks. This is the final position.

Relax the whole body, close the eyes and breathe slowly and deeply. Stay in the final position for as long as is comfortable. Return to the starting position. Perform a counterpose and then relax in shavasana.

It is said that this asana strengthens the nervous system. Flexibility is required only for bending forward from the hips, as the body is then locked in the final position, with the legs stretched forward and the hands behind the buttocks. This asana resembles a tortoise in the final position, the back of the body representing the shell and the arms and legs the four limbs.

Breathing: Exhale while bending forward. Breathe normally in the final position.

Duration: Hold the pose for up to three minutes in the final position. For spiritual purposes, it may be held for longer periods.

Awareness: On relaxing the spine, back muscles and abdomen, and on the breath. For spiritual purposes, the point of concentration is swadhisthana or manipura chakra.

Sequence: Follow or precede with a backward bending asana such as bhujangasana, matsyasana or supta vajrasana. Poorna dhanurasana is the perfect counterpose for koormasana.

Contra-indications: People suffering from slipped disc, sciatica, hernia or chronic arthritis should not perform this asana. It should only be attempted if the spine is sufficiently flexible.

Benefits: Koormasana tones all the organs of the abdomen and is helpful in managing diabetes, flatulence and constipation. It increases flexibility and circulation in the spine, soothing the nerves and relieving head and neck ache. It is an excellent asana for focusing the mind by maintaining awareness of the normal breath. Koormasana is most useful for controlling anger, but as it is difficult, shashankasana, which has similar benefits, is widely recommended.

Full practice

The technique of koormasana as described here by Sage Gheranda is quite different to Variation 1, but again the

body becomes shaped like that of a tortoise, with just the arms and legs visible.

Place the heels in opposite directions under the perineal floor, under the testes, with the toes protruding from under the body. The head, neck and trunk should be in a straight line. The hands rest on the knees. Close the eyes and relax. This is koormasana.

Benefits: This asana is practised for mental relaxation and introversion and induces a sense of composure, inner security and surrender. The effects of pleasure and pain are removed. Passion and fear subside, leaving the body and mind refreshed. This asana prepares the spiritual aspirant for the fifth stage of yogic practice, *pratyahara*, sense withdrawal, which is symbolized by the tortoise. It is stated in the *Bhagavad Gita* (2:58): “When one can withdraw the senses from association with other objects, as a tortoise withdraws its limbs from external danger, then one is firmly fixed on the path towards wisdom.”

22. UTTHAN KOORMASANA (upright tortoise pose)

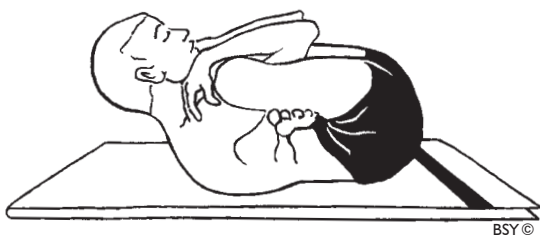
Verse 33

कुक्कुटासनबन्धस्थं कराभ्यां धृतकन्धरम् ।
पीठं कूर्मवदुत्तानमेतदुत्तानकूर्मकम् ॥ 33 ॥

*Kukkutaasanabandhastham karaabhyaam dhritakandharam;
Peetham koormavaduttaanametaduttaanakoommakam.*

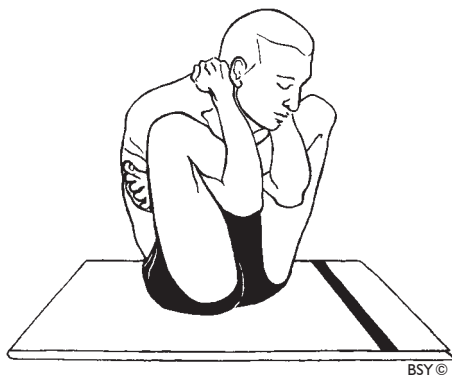
Practising kukkutasana, then holding the shoulders in both hands in kukkutasana and straightening the body like a tortoise is called utthan koormasana.

To protect the back, it is necessary to use a good yoga mat or blanket, so that the bones in the spine are not damaged if one topples over from the upright variation. Otherwise hold the supine variation.



Variation 1

The practice of utthan koormasana can be done directly from padmasana. In padmasana the hands are inserted between the thighs and calves, one holds the neck or shoulders and then rolls onto the floor, lying on the back like an inverted tortoise.



Variation 2

The difference between kukkutasana and utthan koormasana is that in utthan koormasana, instead of placing the palms of the hands on the floor and balancing on them, the hands hold the shoulders or neck while the legs remain in the posture of padmasana.

Utthan koormasana can also be practised in a vertical position, balancing on the tail bone. This variation is usually known as garbhasana.

Benefits: In this constricted position of the body, pressure is created on all the internal organs. Digestion is improved.

This asana accelerates the circulation of fresh blood around the entire body. In particular, it is performed to remove stagnant blood from the muscles. Utthan koormasana induces calmness and is very helpful for the management of anger and nervous disorders if it can be practised comfortably.

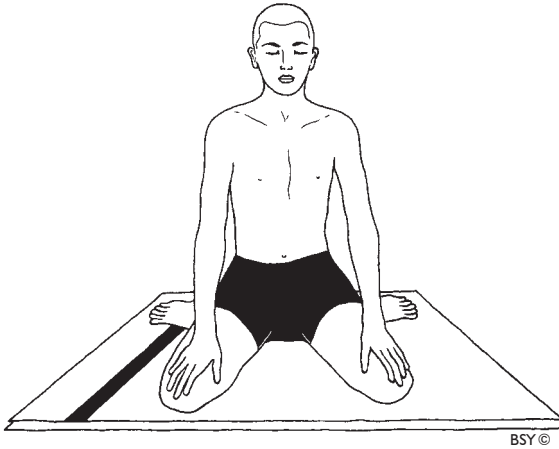
23. MANDUKASANA (frog pose)

Verse 34

पृष्ठदेशे पादतलावङ्गुष्ठौ द्वौ च संस्पृशेत् ।
जानुयुग्मं पुरस्कृत्य साध्येन्मण्डूकासनम् ॥ 34 ॥

*Prishthadeshe paadatalaavangushthau dvau cha samsprishet;
Jaanuyugmam puraskritya saadhyenmandookaasanam.*

Bring both feet to the back, join the big toes and keep both knees in front. Thus is performed mandukasana.



BSY ©

Technique

The technique for practising mandukasana is very simple. Sit in vajrasana and separate the knees as far

as possible without straining. Separate the feet and heels just enough so that the buttocks rest on the floor comfortably. The toes point outward and the inside edge of the feet remains in contact with the floor. If it is not possible to sit with the toes pointing outward, they may be kept pointing inwards, but the buttocks should rest on the floor. Place the hands on the knees, hold the spine and head straight. Close the eyes and relax the whole body. This asana is *manduki*, which means it resembles the posture of a frog.

Breathing: Breathing should be slow and rhythmic.

Contra-indications: Do not practise unless the ankles, knees and hips are very flexible.

Benefits: One feels fresh after the practice of this asana. Semen is preserved.

24. UTTHAN MANDUKASANA (upright frog pose)

Verse 35

मण्डुकासनमध्यस्थं कूर्पराभ्यां धृतं शिरः ।
एतद्भेकवदुत्तानमेतदुत्तानमण्डुकम् ॥ ३५ ॥

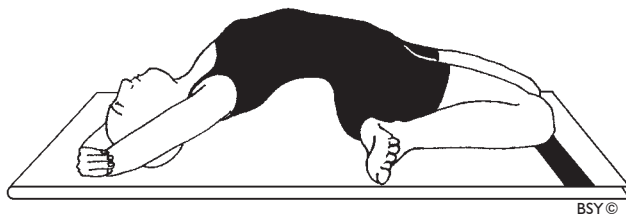
*Mandukaasanamadhyastham koorparaabhyaam dhritam shirah;
Etadbhekavaduttaanametaduttaanamamandukam.*

Adopting mandukasana, the head is placed firmly on the elbows and the chest, abdomen and waist are lifted up like a frog. This is utthan mandukasana.

The practice of utthan mandukasana begins like *supta vajrasana*.

Technique

In utthan mandukasana the starting position is *mandukasana*. From *mandukasana*, slowly arch backwards, using the arms and elbows for support. Bring the top of the



head to the floor. This is similar to the variation of *supta vajrasana* where the arms are folded comfortably behind the head and the back is arched like a bow. (Refer to *Asana Pranayama Mudra Bandha* by Swami Satyananda). In *utthan mandukasana*, the waist is also lifted up. By raising the waist and hips, the weight of the body is supported only by the elbows and head. The feet and knees remain separated.

Breathing: Deep and slow.

Awareness: The point of concentration is *manipura chakra*.

Contra-indications: People suffering from neck problems, sciatica, slipped disc, sacral ailments or knee complaints should not practise this asana.

Benefits: This asana is performed to expand the chest and is beneficial for overcoming respiratory diseases such as asthma, bronchitis and other lung ailments. It redirects sexual energy to the brain for spiritual purposes.

25. VRIKSHASANA (tree pose)

Verse 36

वामोरुमूलदेशे च याम्यं पादं निधाय वै ।
तिष्ठेत्तु वृक्षवद्भूमौ वृक्षासनमिदं विदुः ॥ 36 ॥

*Vaamorumooladeshe cha yaamyam paadam nidhaaya vai;
Tishthettu vrikshavadbhoomau vrikshaasanamidam viduh.*

Place the right foot at the root of the left thigh and stand straight on the ground like a tree. This is called vrikshasana.

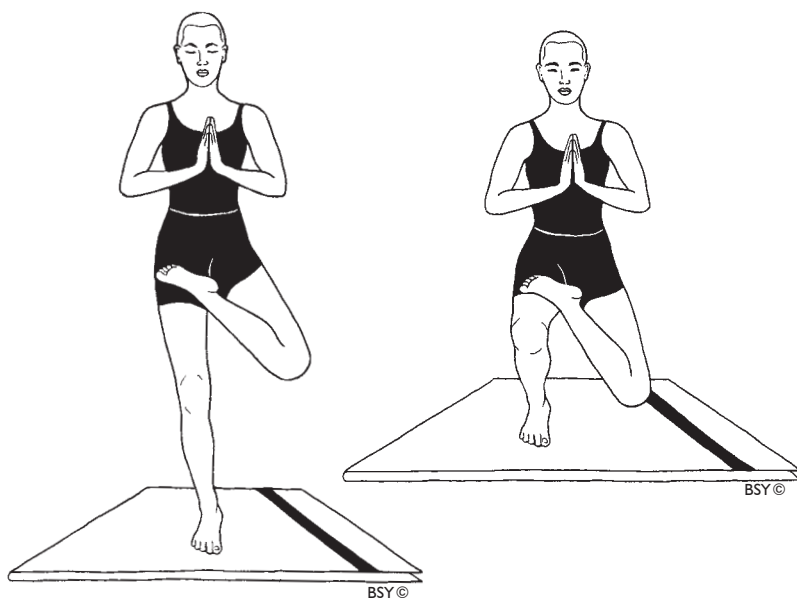
The asana described here by Sage Gheranda as vrikshasana is not the one known by that name today. Sage Gheranda's variation of vrikshasana is now commonly known as *vatayan-asana*, flying horse pose. It is one of the balancing asanas.

Technique

Stand with the feet together. Focus the gaze on a fixed point at eye level. Bending the right knee, place the foot on the left thigh in the half lotus position. Stand steadily like a tree. Place the palms of the hands together in front of the chest in pranam mudra. This is the starting position.

Shift the weight to the left leg, bend the left knee and slowly lower the body, maintaining balance until the right knee rests on the floor. Hold the final position for a short duration, with the weight evenly balanced on the left foot and right knee. Slowly raise the body by straightening the left knee, and return to the starting position. Release the right leg and lower it to the floor. The practice can be repeated on the other side.

Breathing: Inhale while standing on one foot in the starting position. Retain the breath while lowering and raising the body. Breathe normally in the final position. Exhale when once more standing upright in the starting position.



Awareness: On maintaining physical balance. The mind is focused on anahata chakra.

Precautions: Strong leg muscles and a good sense of balance are needed to practise this asana successfully. Do not rush into the practice, but first practise the preparatory balancing and leg strengthening asanas, such as the modern day garudasana variation. If balance is lost, the kneecap of the leg locked in half lotus pose can be damaged, so it is essential to have sufficient strategic padding in place. Only healthy people should attempt vrikshasana or vatayanasana.

Contra-indications: This is a strenuous practice. People with high blood pressure, heart problems, hernia, vertigo, slipped disc, sciatica, weak back, hips, knees or ankles should not attempt this practice. It should not be performed during pregnancy.

Benefits: This asana is practised to achieve a heightened sense of balance. It strengthens the leg muscles, knee joints and the abdominal region. It reduces hyper-

activity of the kidneys and diuresis. It develops the ability to retain seminal fluid for the maintenance of brahmacharya.

26. GARUDASANA (eagle pose)

Verse 37

जङ्घोरुभ्यां धरां पीड्य स्थिरकायो द्विजानुना ।
जानूपरि करद्वन्द्वं गरुडासनमुच्यते ॥ 37 ॥

*Janghorubhyaam dharaam peedya sthirakaayo dvijaanunaa;
Jaanoopari karadvandvam garudaasanamuchyate.*

Press the ground with both the thighs and knees, keep the body steady and sit with both hands on the knees. This is called garudasana.

The practice of garudasana as explained by Sage Gheranda is a meditation posture, requiring great suppleness of the knees. It is different from the way the asana is commonly practised today, although the benefits for both versions are similar.

Technique

To achieve the asana as described by Sage Gheranda, one can sit in vajrasana, then move the feet to the sides with the toes pointing away from the body so that the thighs rest on the floor.

Alternatively, the usual method of practising this asana is as follows. Stretch the legs in front of the body, then bend the knees so that the feet are by the buttocks and the toes point away from the body as much as possible while sitting on the floor. Press the thighs to the floor. The spine should be kept straight and the weight of the body on the heels and buttocks reduced, so that the entire weight is on the thighs. Rest the hands on the knees.

Variation

Today, garudasana is usually practised as a balancing posture from the standing position.

Focus the gaze on a steady point. Transfer the weight to the left leg and twist the right leg around it. The right thigh should be in front of the left thigh and the top of the right foot should lightly press the left calf muscle. Bend the elbows and bring them in front of the chest, so that the hands are near the face.

Intertwine the forearms with the left elbow supporting the right. Place the palms together so the hands resemble an eagle's beak.

Balance in this position for some time, then bend the left knee and slowly lower the body until the elbows come down to the knees. Keep the back straight. Keep the balance by concentrating on the steady point.

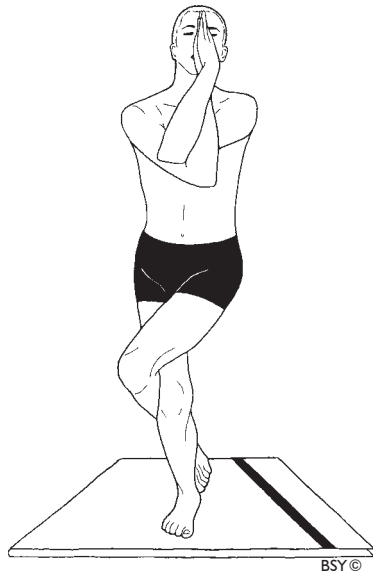
Hold the balance in the final position for as long as is comfortable, then slowly straighten the left leg and return to the upright position, maintaining concentration and balance. Release the arms, release the right leg, stand on two feet and relax. Repeat once more with the right leg bearing the weight of the body.

Breathing: Breathe normally throughout the practice

Awareness: Physical – on maintaining balance while lowering and raising the body.

Spiritual – on mooladhara chakra.

Contra-indications: The asana as described by Sage Gheranda is not advisable for the general practitioner. The modern day variation gives similar benefits with less



danger of straining the joints, particularly for people living a modern day sedentary lifestyle.

Benefits: Garudasana strengthens the muscles, tones the nerves and loosens the joints of the shoulders, arms and legs. It is good for the upper back and is helpful in the treatment of rheumatism and hydrocele. This practice helps develop concentration and awaken kundalini shakti.

27. VRISHASANA (bull pose)

Verse 38

याम्यगुल्फे पादमूले वामभागे पदेतरम् ।
विपरीते स्पृशेद् भूमिवृषासनमिदं भवेत् ॥ 38 ॥

*Yaamyagulphe paadamoolo vaamabhaage padetaram;
Vipareetam sprished bhoomimvrishaasanamidam bhavet.*

Place the anus on the right foot. The upturned left foot touches the ground on the right side with the left heel to the left side of the anus. The top of the feet should remain on the floor. This is called vrishasana.

This is one of the simplest asanas. The first stage can be practised by everyone with good flexibility in the legs.

Technique

Stage I: Sit with the legs stretched out in front of the body. Bend the knee and bring the right heel close to the groin, then lift up the body and sit on the right foot. Bend the left knee and bring the left foot close to the left buttock. Most people will find that the toes of the foot are pointing away from the body and the position is fairly comfortable. The weight of the body can be adjusted on top of the right foot. Practise on the other side.

Stage 2: If one has very flexible ankles, the left ankle can then swivel so that the top of the foot touches the floor and the toes point in towards the body. The left heel stays on the left side of the anus, but the toes are on the right side. Also practise on the other side.

Precautions: This asana requires extremely flexible ankles and feet and is not suitable for the general practitioner.

Contra-indications: Do not practise this asana, or hold the position, if there is any pain in the joints.

Benefits: Mooladhara chakra is automatically stimulated, giving increased energy. Some people have a structural difficulty in the body, so that the swivel to one side experienced in the first stage of this asana is actually more comfortable than a 'straight' meditation posture such as siddhasana.

28. SHALABHASANA (locust pose)

Verse 39

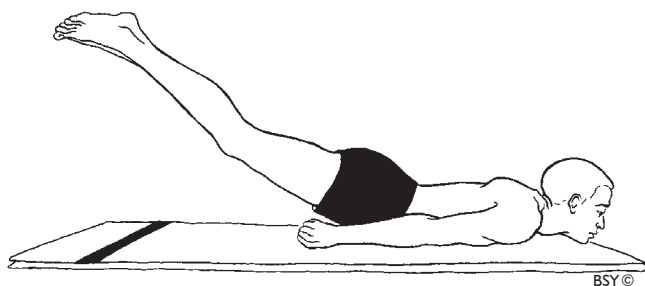
अध्यास्य शेते करयुग्मवक्ष आलम्ब्य भूमिं करयोस्तलाभ्याम् ।
पादौ च शून्ये च वितस्ति चोर्ध्यं वदन्ति पीठं शलभं मुनीन्द्राः ॥ ३९ ॥

*Adhyaasya shete karayugmavaksha aalambya bhoomim karay-
ostalaabhyaam;*

*Paadau cha shoonye cha vitasti chordhyam vadanti peetham
shalabham munindraa.*

Lie flat with the face towards the ground. Both arms are placed by the sides of the chest. The palms should be placed firmly on the ground. The legs are raised in this position. Munis have called it shalabhasana.

Since the body assumes the shape of a *shalabh*, a locust, while doing the practice, it is called shalabhasana, the locust pose.



Technique

Lie flat on the stomach with the legs and feet together and the soles of the feet uppermost. In the initial stage the hands may be placed under the thighs, palms facing downward, and can be used as a support to raise the legs, but gradually, with mastery over the practice, the arms are placed by the sides of the body. Stretch the chin slightly forward and rest it on the floor throughout the practice. Close the eyes and relax the whole body. This is the starting position.

Slowly raise the legs as high as possible without straining, keeping them straight and together. The elevation of the legs is produced by applying pressure with the arms against the floor and contracting the lower back muscles. Hold the final position as long as is comfortable without strain. Slowly lower the legs to the floor. This is one round. Return to the starting position and relax the body with the head turned to one side. Allow the respiration and heartbeat to return to normal.

Breathing: Inhale deeply in the starting position. Retain the breath inside while raising the legs and holding the final position. Exhale while lowering the legs. Beginners may find it helpful to inhale while raising the legs. Advanced practitioners may exhale after returning to the starting position.

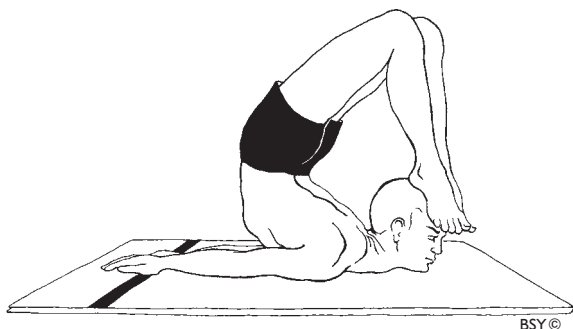
Duration: Up to five rounds when performed dynamically. Up to three rounds when performed statically.

Awareness: Focus the mind on swadhisthana or vishuddhi chakra.

Contra-indications: Shalabhasana requires a great deal of physical effort, so it should not be practised by people with a weak heart, coronary thrombosis or high blood pressure. Those suffering from peptic ulcer, hernia, intestinal tuberculosis and other such conditions are also advised not to practise this asana.

Sequence: Most beneficial when performed after bhujangasana and before dhanurasana.

Benefits: This asana strengthens the lower back and pelvic organs, and tones the sciatic nerves, providing relief from backache, mild sciatica and slipped disc as long as the condition is not serious. It tones and balances the functioning of the liver, stomach, bowels and other abdominal organs, and stimulates the appetite. The parasympathetic nerves are particularly prominent in the region of the neck and pelvis. Shalabhasana stimulates the whole autonomic nervous system, especially the parasympathetic outflow.



Poorna Shalabhasana (full locust pose)

Poorna shalabhasana, the final position, is even more strenuous and should only be attempted when shalabhasana can be performed comfortably. The legs are raised completely and the weight of the body is

shifted onto the shoulders. The shape of the spine becomes like a bow, with the entire weight of the body on the shoulders, chest and chin. In order to achieve the final position, it is imperative that balance of the body is precisely maintained, otherwise injury to the neck may occur.

Assume the final position of shalabhasana with the legs raised in the air as high as possible. Tense the arm muscles. Keep the arms and shoulders in firm contact with the floor to support the body. Lift the legs with a jerk to the vertical position and balance on the shoulders, chin and arms. Once the point of balance is obtained, gradually bend the knees and bring the toes down to touch the head. This is the final position.

Hold the final position for as long as is comfortable. To return to the starting position, lift the feet from the head and find the point of balance. Then slowly lower the body to the starting position.

Duration: Practise one or two rounds, slowly increasing the length of time in the final position.

Awareness: On the abdomen, relaxing the back and maintaining balance.

For spiritual purposes, concentrate on vishuddhi chakra.

Precautions: This advanced form of shalabhasana should only be performed by people who are physically fit and have very supple backs.

Benefits: As for shalabhasana. Many of the benefits of inverted asanas also apply.

29. MAKARASANA (crocodile pose)

Verse 40

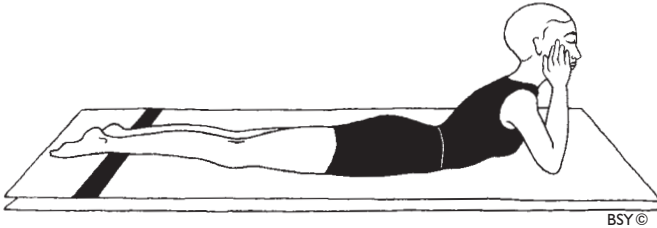
अध्यास्य शेते हृदयं निधाय, भूमौ च पादौ प्रसार्यमाणौ ।
शिरश्च धृत्वा करदण्डयुग्मे, देहाग्निकारं मकरासनं तत् ॥ 40 ॥

*Adhyaasya shete hridayam nidhaaya, bhoomau cha paadau
prasaaryamaanau;*

*Shirashcha dhritvaa karadandayugme, dehaagnikaaram makar-
aasanam tat.*

Lie with the chest on the ground and the legs spread out and hold the head in the arms. This asana, which activates fire of the body, is called makarasana.

Sage Gheranda says the chest should be touching the earth and, *paadau prasaaryamaanau*, the legs should be kept separated. Today the practice of makarasana is normally done with the legs kept together or slightly separated and the chest raised as follows.



Technique

Lie flat on the stomach. Raise the head and shoulders and rest the chin in the palms of the hands with the elbows on the floor. Keep the elbows together for a more pronounced arch to the spine. Separate the elbows slightly to relieve excess pressure on the neck.

In makarasana the effect is felt at two points: the neck and the lower back. If the elbows are too far in front,

tension will be felt in the neck. If they are drawn too close to the chest, tension will be felt more in the lower back. Adjust the position of the elbows so that these two points are equally balanced. Relax the whole body and close the eyes.

Breathing: Natural and rhythmic.

Duration: This asana may be practised for as long as is comfortable.

Awareness: Count the breaths with concentration on the lower back. People with back or spinal complaints may practise moving the awareness up along the spine from the tailbone to the neck with inhalation and back down with exhalation. Imagine that the breath is moving up and down the spine, like mercury in a glass tube. This will quickly activate the healing energies in this area. For lower back pain due to tension, concentrate on this area and feel it expanding and relaxing with every inhalation and exhalation.

For spiritual purposes, concentrate on manipura chakra.

Contra-indications: People with back conditions, such as exaggerated lumbar curve, should not practise this asana if any pain is experienced.

Benefits: Makarasana expands the chest and lungs. Asthmatics and people who have any other lung ailments should practise this simple asana regularly with breath awareness as it allows more air to enter the lungs, and helps to clear accumulated kapha or phlegm from the throat.

This asana is very effective for people suffering from slipped disc, sciatica, and certain types of lower back pain. They should remain in this asana for extended periods of time as it encourages the vertebral column to resume its normal shape and relieves compression of the spinal nerves.

30. USHTRASANA (camel pose)

Verse 41

अध्यास्य शेते पदयुग्मव्यस्तं, पृष्ठे निधायपि धृतं कराभ्याम् ।
आकुञ्च्य सम्यग्ध्युदरास्यगाढं, उष्ट्रं च पीठं यतयो वदन्ति ॥41॥

*Adhyaasya shete padayugmavyastam, prishthe nidhaayaapi dhritam
karaabhyaam;*

*Aakunchya samyagdhyaudaraasyagaadham, ushtram cha peetham
yatayo vadanti.*

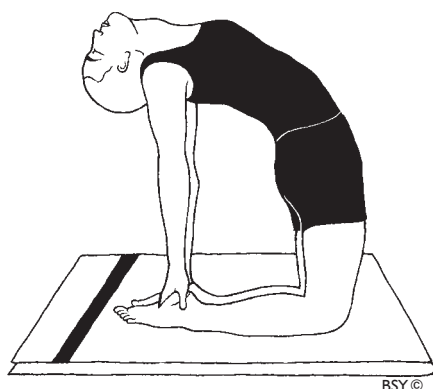
Lie prone (face downwards). Bend both the legs and cross them behind the back. Hold the feet with the hands and squeeze the mouth and abdomen firmly. This is called ushtrasana.

Ushtrasana as described by Sage Gheranda has the feet held by the hands behind the back in the prone position. It would be like dhanurasana except that he has the feet crossed so that the left foot is held in the right hand and the right foot is held by the left hand. He also says to contract the mouth. This is different from the practice prevalent today, which is performed standing on the knees with the face relaxed. The technique is now normally taught as follows.

Technique

Sit in vajrasana. Stand on the knees with the arms at the sides. The shins remain on the floor. The knees and feet may be together or separated if this is more comfortable. Lean backward, slowly reaching for the right heel with the right hand, and then the left heel with the left hand.

The heels can be separated up to a waist width apart if this is more comfortable. The thighs should be as straight as possible. The body is kept straight from the knees to the waist and the body above the waist arches backward. To assume this posture correctly the hips



are pushed forward and the head and back are tilted backward as far as is comfortable. Relax the whole body, particularly the spine and back muscles. The weight of the body should be evenly supported by the arms and legs. The arms support the shoulders to maintain the arch of the back.

Remain in the final position for as long as is comfortable. Return to the starting position by slowly releasing the hands from the heels one at a time and placing them on the lower back for support before straightening the body, neck and head. While practising ushtrasana the body assumes the shape of a camel's hump.

Variation: Once the basic practice described above can be performed without strain, it can be done holding the right heel with the left hand. This means there is a twist incorporated into the asana along with the backward bend. Then practise on the other side, holding the left heel with the right hand.

Breathing: Breathe normally in the final position. Do not try to breathe deeply because the chest is already stretched.

Duration: Practise up to three times as a dynamic asana. Hold the final position for up to three minutes as a static pose.

Awareness: Physical awareness should be directed to the abdomen, throat, spine or natural breathing. For

spiritual purposes, concentrate on swadhisthana or vishuddhi chakra.

Sequence: It is important that this asana is followed by a forward bending asana, such as paschimottanasana, to release any tension in the back. The most convenient counterpose is shashankasana since it may be performed immediately from vajrasana without unnecessary movement of the body.

Precautions: When the head is tilted backward while holding the breath, the pressure of the blood may increase in the brain and cause giddiness. It is advisable to keep the head straight if giddiness is felt while doing this asana, otherwise the head should be tilted backward slowly.

Contra-indications: People who feel giddy when looking down from a high place, and those suffering from high blood pressure should not practise this asana. People with severe back ailments such as lumbago should not attempt it without expert guidance. Those suffering from an enlarged thyroid should also take care.

Benefits: This asana is beneficial for the digestive and reproductive systems. It stretches the stomach and intestines, alleviating constipation. The backward bend loosens up the vertebrae and stimulates the spinal nerves, relieving backache, lumbago, rounded back and drooping shoulders. The front of the neck is fully stretched, toning the organs in this region and regulating the thyroid gland. It is helpful for people suffering from asthma.

31. BHUJANGASANA (cobra pose)

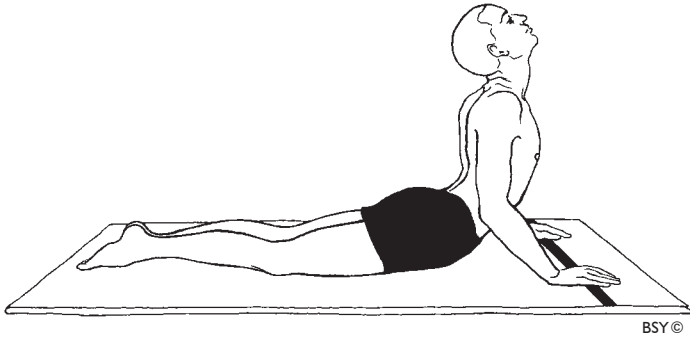
Verses 42–43

अङ्गुष्ठानाभिपर्यन्तमधोभूमौ च विन्यसेत् ।
धरां करतलाभ्यां धृत्वोर्ध्वशीर्षं फणीव हि ॥ 42 ॥
देहाग्निर्वर्द्धते नित्यं सर्वरोगविनाशनम् ।
जागर्ति भुजङ्गीदेवी भुजङ्गासनसाधनात् ॥ 43 ॥

*Angushthanaabhiparyantamadhobhoomau cha vinyaset;
Dharaam karatalaabhyaam dhritvordhvasheersham phaneeva hi.*
(42)

*Dehaagnirvarddhate nityam sarvarogavinaashanam;
Jaagarti bhujangeedeevee bhujangaasanasaadhanaat.* (43)

Keep the body from the toes to the navel on the floor and placing the palms of the hands also firmly on the floor, raise the head like a snake. This is called bhujangasana. The fire of the body increases, all diseases are destroyed and kundalini shakti is awakened by the practice of bhujangasana.



Technique

Lie flat on the stomach with the legs straight, feet together and the soles of the feet uppermost and relaxed. Place the palms of the hands flat on the floor, below and slightly to the side of the shoulders, with the fingers together and pointing forward. The arms should

be positioned so that the elbows point backward and are close to the sides of the body. Rest the forehead on the floor and close the eyes.

Slowly raise the upper part of the trunk of the body, keeping the navel region on the floor. The lower portion of the body from the toes to the navel remains in a relaxed state. The head is slowly raised like the hood of a snake.

Be aware of using the neck muscles first while starting to raise the head, and then the back muscles to raise the trunk. Then use the arm muscles to raise the trunk further and arch the back. Gently tilt the head backward so that the chin points forward and the back of the neck is compressed.

In the final position, the pubic bone remains in contact with the floor and the navel touches the floor or is raised a maximum of 3 cm. If the navel is raised too high, the bend tends to be in the knees and not in the back. The arms may or may not be straight; this will depend on the flexibility of the back. Hold the final position for as long as is comfortable.

To return to the starting position, slowly release the upper back by bending the arms, and lower the navel, chest, shoulders and finally the forehead to the floor. Relax the lower back muscles. This is one round.

Breathing: Inhale while raising the torso. Breathe normally in the final position or retain the breath if the pose is held for a short time. Exhale while lowering the torso.

Duration: Practise up to five rounds, gradually increasing the length of time in the final position.

Sequence: This asana gives maximum benefits if practised in conjunction with shalabhasana and dhanurasana for effective general health of the back and the spine. However, as all three are backward bends, a strong forward bend such as paschimottanasana needs to be incorporated in the sequence.

Contra-indications: People suffering from peptic ulcer, hernia, intestinal tuberculosis or hyperthyroidism should not practise this asana without expert guidance.

Benefits: Bhujangasana expands the chest, which improves and deepens breathing. It can help to remove backache and keep the spine supple and healthy. A stiff spine interferes with all the nervous impulses sent from the brain to the body and vice versa. By arching the spine, improving circulation in the back region and toning the nerves, better communication between the brain and body results. People suffering from slipped disc or sciatica can also benefit from this asana, but care should be taken.

This asana tones the ovaries and uterus, and helps alleviate menstrual and other gynaecological disorders. It stimulates the appetite, alleviates constipation and is beneficial for all the abdominal organs, especially the liver and kidneys. The adrenal glands, situated on top of the kidneys, are also massaged and stimulated to work more efficiently. The secretion of cortisone is maintained and the thyroid gland is regulated.

Sarvarogavinaashanam, all types of diseases are eradicated by practising this asana. Research has shown that bhujangasana strengthens the nervous system. All the nerves from the brain to the toes are energized, and coordination and balance are established inside the body.

On a pranic level, bhujangasana has a strong effect on all the organs related to swadhisthana, manipura, anahata and vishuddhi chakras. Bhujangini Devi, or *kundalini shakti*, the evolutionary energy within, is also awakened by this practice.

32. YOGASANA (posture of union)

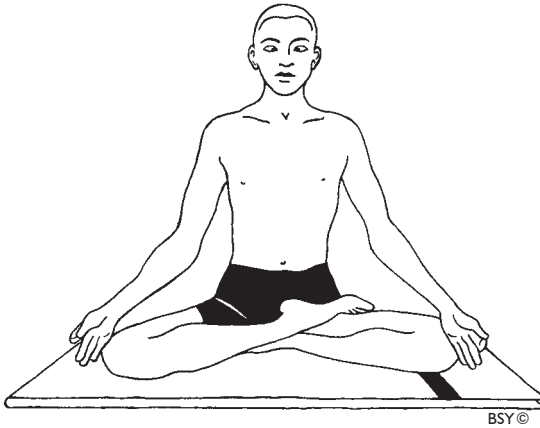
Verses 44–45

उत्तानौ चरणौ कृत्वा संस्थाप्योपरि जानुनोः ।
आसनोपरि संस्थाप्य चोत्तानं करयुग्मकम् ॥ 44 ॥
पूरकैर्वायुमाकृष्य नासाग्रमवलोकयेत् ।
योगासनं भवेदेतद्योगिनां योगसाधने ॥ 45 ॥

*Uttanau charanau kritvaa samsthaapyopari jaanunoh;
Aasanopari samsthaapya chottaanam karayugmakam. (44)*

*Poorakairvaayumaakrishya naasaagramavalokayet;
Yogaasanam bhavedetadyoginaam yogasaadhane. (45)*

Place both the feet on the opposite knees and keep both hands on the knees in chin mudra. With inhalation suck the air inside and hold the breath while gazing at the nosetip. Yogis must practise it daily. It is called yogasana.



Technique

Yogasana, which has been described here, is an easy form of padmasana, a sort of half padmasana in which the feet

are on the thighs but not right on top of the thighs close to the body. In this position the hands are placed on the knees. Nasikagra drishti is then practised.

It is an easy asana which can be practised by anyone, anywhere, for meditation, concentration, japa, steadiness and normal and natural sitting.

Chapter Three

Mudra and
Bandha

Introduction to Mudra and Bandha

In the third chapter of *Gheranda Samhita*, mudra and bandha are described. Sage Gheranda imparted this knowledge to Chandakapali to bring about mental stability.

In yoga, the significance of mudras and bandhas is even greater than that of asana and pranayama, because mudras influence pranayama and manomaya koshas. In the body, many sensations originate within the nervous system and many changes take place on the mental plane. In the pranic field, the production of energy in the body also fluctuates. For these reasons, both activity and dissipation are experienced in the inner mental state and also in the pranic state.

From the gross point of view, *mudra* is a term meaning a gesture or a particular mood or feeling of consciousness. The mudras described in the yogic scriptures are manifestations of special moods or feelings of consciousness, *chitta*, and states of energy, *prana*. Knowledge of mudras and their techniques is known to very few *sadhakas*, practitioners.

In Indian dance, different mudras or gestures are used to depict a particular mood or feeling. Anger is depicted through the eyes, the position of the hands and the physical posture. This is just one example. It has also been observed that if a particular mudra is practised for extended periods of time, a feeling created by that mudra is experienced. The same kind of sensation depicted by the mudra is created

in the body and mind. This also happens in daily life. For instance, an angry person raises the eyebrows, tenses the hands and clenches the fists. Even if one is not angry, this feeling will gradually manifest if these physical actions are adopted. Whichever physical state is adopted creates a particular kind of sensation in the nervous system and brings about a change in the brainwaves. This change in the brainwaves influences the state of consciousness and for some time that particular feeling is experienced inside on the mental plane.

The mudras and bandhas which have been described in the yogic texts are helpful in putting to rest and controlling the sensations and stimulations of the nervous system. The mudras known in yoga are often shown in portraits, images or idols of saints and sages or gods and goddesses, for example, jnana mudra, chin mudra, shankhmudra and abhaya mudra.

Mudras such as ashwini mudra, vajroli mudra and tadagi mudra are practised in kundalini yoga and kriya yoga. These mudras influence pranamaya kosha and are used to change the flow of prana. Their influence is felt on the brain as well and they help in awakening a certain feeling inside chitta so that one becomes introverted and internalized. These practices are also helpful in achieving one-pointedness and concentration.

The *bandhas* are in fact physical and psychic locks which disrupt the sensations being created in the nerves inside the body and brain, and awaken other specific kinds of sensations. Any process of contraction or expansion in the internal organs, whether in the neck, throat, perineum or anal region, changes the reactions, emotions and the quantum of energy in the internal organs. It brings the body to a stimulated or peaceful state, resulting in the experience of a feeling of inner stability.

Many philosophies, religions and systems of thought in the world believe that it is necessary to completely detach oneself from the external world in order to experience some

sort of spiritual or inner realization. The main aim of mudras and bandhas is to help attain an inner state in which external emotions and events do not scatter the mental state. One should be able to keep the mind one-pointed in prayer or meditation and not allow any negative feelings or reactions to manifest internally.

It is said in Vedanta that everything is transitory; it is all *maya*, illusion and delusion – leave it, and abide in the truth. But in yoga and tantra it is said that whatever state one is in should be used as a ladder to higher states. Yoga believes that if one wishes to attain one-pointedness and some sort of spiritual experience, that experience can be achieved through the medium of the senses also. The senses may be expanded and activated so much that the mind spontaneously becomes one-pointed. Mudras can play a role here; for example, khechari mudra is related to the senses.

Sage Gheranda describes the process involved in the practice of mudras and bandhas. One can activate, expand and absorb oneself in the sensations manifesting inside by adopting a particular technique. Making use of physical and psychic gestures activates the sensations of annamaya kosha, pranamaya kosha and manomaya kosha in order to go inside them. Mudras and bandhas play a very significant role in this second process.

Verses 1-3

महामुद्रा नभोमुद्रा उड्डीयानं जलन्धरम् ।
मूलबन्धो महाबन्धो महाबेधश्च खेचरी ॥ 1 ॥
विपरीतकरी योनिर्वज्रोणी शक्तिचालनी ।
ताडागी माण्डुकी मुद्रा शाम्भवी पञ्चधारणा ॥ 2 ॥
अश्विनी पाशिनी काकी मातङ्गी च भुजङ्गिनी ।
पञ्चविंशतिमुद्राश्च सिद्धिदा इह योगिनाम् ॥ 3 ॥

*Mahaamudraa nabhomudraa uddeeyaanam jalandharam;
Moolabandho mahaabandho mahaabedhashcha khecharee. (1)*

*Vipareetakaree yonirvajronee shaktichalaneer;
Taadaagee maandukee mudraa shaambhavee panchadhaaranaa. (2)*

*Ashvinee paashinee kaakee maatangee cha bhujanginee;
Panchavimshatimudraashcha siddhidaa iha yoginaam. (3)*

Maha mudra, nabho mudra, uddiyana bandha, jal-andhara bandha, moola bandha, maha bandha, maha bheda mudra, khechari mudra, vipareeta karani mudra, yoni mudra, vajroni mudra, shakti chalini mudra, tadagi mudra, manduki mudra, shambhavi mudra, the five dharanas or concentrations, ashwini, pashinee, kaki, matangini and bhujangini are the twenty-five mudras. These enable yogis to attain siddhi, perfection or mastery.

In these verses sixteen mudras, four bandhas and five concentration practices (parthivi dharana, ambhasi dharana, agneyi dharana, vayviye dharana and akashi dharana) are described. In the spiritual field it is believed that perfection or mastery over mudras provides eight main siddhis. Mudras are also practised to activate the pranas and awaken the kundalini. Additionally, research has revealed that mudras and bandhas are helpful in eradicating disease.

Verses 4–5

मुद्राणां पटलं देवि कथितं तव संनिधौ ।
येन विज्ञातमात्रेण सर्वं सिद्धिः प्रजायते ॥ 4 ॥
गोपनीयं प्रयत्नेन न देयं यस्यकस्यचित् ।
प्रीतिदं योगिनां चैव दुर्लभंमरुतामपि ॥ 5 ॥

*Mudraanaam patalam devi kathitam tarva sannidhau;
Yena vijnaatamaatreṇa sarva siddhiḥ prajaayate. (4)*

*Gopaneeyam prayatnena na deyam yasyakasyachit;
Preetidam yoginaam chaiva durlabhammarutaamapi. (5)*

O Goddess! I have imparted the knowledge of mudras. Mere knowledge of these provides mastery. Their knowledge provides bliss to yogis. This knowledge is not easily accessible even to the gods. Always keep this knowledge secret.

The knowledge of mudras and bandhas was first imparted by Lord Shiva to Mother Parvati. The declaration that this knowledge is not easily accessible even to the gods clearly reflects the significance of mudras. These practices should not be undertaken aimlessly. Only competent and deserving practitioners and disciples should try to master them.

Sage Gheranda explained the mudras in the sequence described above. It would be difficult, however, to understand them in this sequence, so they will be explained under different headings. Firstly, the four bandhas, locks, will be explained, then the five dharanas, concentrations, and finally the remaining sixteen mudras.

Bandha: Four Locks

The first of the four bandhas is jalandhara bandha, contraction of the neck region. Many nadis, nerves and blood capillaries pass through the neck, which is a relatively small passage, into the head. Therefore, jalandhara bandha exerts an influence on the many nadis concentrated in the region of the neck, throat, head and shoulders.

Jalandhara bandha is a simple practice. Keeping the spine straight, the head is lowered so that the chin touches the throat pit. As this bandha is performed with *kumbhaka*, breath retention, the time that it is held depends on the individual's capacity to retain the breath. The retention can be either external or internal. When this practice is performed correctly, the pressure is divided, so that energy goes towards the head as well as travelling down the back.

The second bandha is uddiyana bandha, contraction of the abdomen. Unlike other parts of the body, the abdomen is not surrounded by bones, the abdominal walls being formed by muscles and nerve fibres. Many nadis terminate in this area. By contracting the abdomen, the navel is pulled back towards the spinal column, held there as long as the breath can be retained comfortably and then released. Uddiyana bandha is only practised with external *kumbhaka*.

The third bandha is moola bandha. The muscles of the urethra and anus are separate. In order to control the urge to urinate, the urethra is tightened, not the anus. Confining

the contraction to the urethra is vajroli mudra. When the contraction is confined to the anus, it is ashwini mudra. Contraction of the area between the two is moola bandha.

To learn to practise moola bandha, alternately practise ashwini and vajroli mudras. When both mudras are practised simultaneously, a tingling sensation is created. In men, this is experienced in the region of mooladhara chakra, called *mooladhara pinda*. For women, the point of psychic concentration and physical contraction is just inside the entrance to the womb.

The fourth bandha is maha bandha, which combines the first three bandhas and transforms the energy patterns of the body.

I. MOOLA BANDHA (perineum contraction)

Verses 6–9

पाष्णिना वामपादस्य योनिमाकुञ्चयेत्ततः ।
नाभिग्रन्थि मेरुदण्डे सुधीः संपीड्य यत्नतः ॥6॥
मेढ्रं दक्षिणगुल्फेन दृढबन्धं समाचरेत् ।
जराविनाशिनी मुद्रा मूलबन्धो निगद्यते ॥7॥
संसारसागरं तर्तुमभिलषति यः पुमान् ।
सुगुप्तो विरलो भूत्वा मुद्रामेतां समभ्यसेत् ॥8॥
अभ्यासाद्वन्धनस्यास्य मरुत्सिद्धिर्भवेद्ध्रुवम् ।
साधयेद्यत्नतस्तर्हि मौनी तु विजितालसः ॥9॥

*Paarshninaa vaamapaadasya yonimaakunchayettatah;
Naabhi-granthim merudande sudheeh sampeedya yatnatah. (6)*

*Medhram dakshinagulphena dridhabandham samaacharet;
Jaraavinaashinee mudraa moolabandho nigadyate. (7)*

*Samsaarasaagaram tartumabhilashati yah pumaan;
Sugupto viralo bhootvaa mudraametaam samabhyaset. (8)*

*Abhyaasaadbandhanasyaasya marutsiddhirbhaveddhruvam;
Saadhayediyatnatatarhi maunee tu vijitaalasah. (9)*

With the left heel, press the genital region between the anus and testes and contract the anus. Make an effort to press the navel knot or complex close to the spinal column and firmly press the genital organ with the right heel. This is moola bandha. It helps in attaining victory over old age. Aspirants who wish to move beyond *samsara*, the materialistic world, should practise this mudra in a hidden place. With the practice, marut siddhi is certain. Therefore, it should be practised with effort, silently and without laziness.

The left heel is pressed into the perineum, close to the anal passage. The asana referred to here is siddhasana for men or siddha yoni asana for women, which specifically influence mooladhara chakra. The effect of moola bandha is exerted on mooladhara chakra. In more advanced practices there is more a psychic than a physical focusing at mooladhara.

It should first be understood that the area influenced by mooladhara chakra includes the anus and urinary tract. The practice described by Sage Gheranda states that the anus and the navel region should be fully contracted. This is a very strong practice and combines two bandhas (moola bandha and uddiyana bandha) and two mudras (vajroli/sahajoli and ashwini mudra) in today's terminology.

The technique generally known as moola bandha today is more specific. The moola bandha trigger point, at the perineum in men or at *yoni greeva*, the opening to the womb, in women, is contracted, but there is no attempt to draw the navel close to the spinal column unless uddiyana bandha is specified as an additional technique.

Also, generally speaking, in the practice of a bandha a state of pressure or focusing is continuously maintained. Contracting and releasing is more indicative of a mudra, while the meaning of *bandha* is to hold that focus, lock it and maintain that lock as long as possible.

Effect on nadis

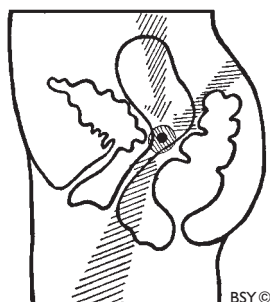
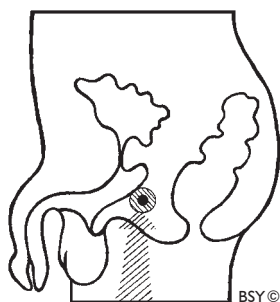
Several nadis emanate from the lower spine and many nadis terminate there. Some nadis emanate from the lower spine and rise up to the brain. Mooladhara, as the base, is very sensitive. When the contraction is continuously maintained, creating an unfamiliar internal sensation, the nadis related to the autonomic nervous system become stimulated. The effect of this stimulation is reflected in the brain via its connection with the spine. There are also centres inside the brain linked with the chakras.

Mooladhara chakra is considered to be located just below the spinal column. It follows that there is a related centre in the brain. It is this centre which is awakened as a result of vibrations at mooladhara. The sensation travels through the nadis up to the brain and simulates the region of the brain associated with mooladhara, as well as the direct influence on the mooladhara region. Another effect of this influence is to change the direction of the flow of apana vayu in the lower body. When the direction of apana vayu changes, victory over old age is achieved. This is recognized as a siddhi in yoga.

Technique

Stage 1: Sit in siddhasana/siddha yoni asana. Close the eyes and relax the whole body. Be aware of the natural breath. Focus the awareness in the perineal/vaginal region. Contract this region by pulling up on the muscles of the pelvic floor and then relaxing them. Continue to briefly contract and relax the perineal/vaginal region as rhythmically and evenly as possible. Breathe normally throughout the practice.

Stage 2: Slowly contract the perineal/vaginal region and hold the contraction. Continue to breathe normally; do not hold the breath. Be totally aware of the physical sensations. Contract a little tighter, but keep the rest of the body relaxed. Contract only those muscles related to the mooladhara region. In the beginning the anal and urinary sphincters also contract, but as greater awareness



and control is developed, this will be minimized and eventually will cease. Ultimately, the practitioner will feel one point of contraction against the heel.

Relax the muscles slowly and evenly. Repeat 10 times with maximum contraction and total relaxation.

Stage 3: Inhale deeply and retain the breath inside. Contract the perineal/vaginal region slowly without straining and hold the contraction as tightly as possible. This is the final stage of moola bandha. Hold moola bandha for as long as the breath can comfortably be retained. Slowly release moola bandha and then exhale.

Awareness: The awareness should be directed to the point of contraction and the breath. Once the final position is attained, the awareness should be fixed at mooladhara chakra.

Contra-indications: Do not practise during menstruation.

Benefits: Moola bandha bestows many physical, mental and spiritual benefits. It stimulates the pelvic nerves and tones the uro-genital and excretory systems. Intestinal peristalsis is also stimulated, relieving constipation and piles. It is also beneficial for anal fissures, ulcers, some cases of prostatic hypertrophy and chronic pelvic infections. Because this practice releases energy, it is also effective in the treatment of psychosomatic and some degenerative illnesses.

Its effects spread throughout the body via the brain and endocrine system, making it beneficial in cases

of asthma, bronchitis and arthritis. It also relieves depression. Mastery of this practice leads to spontaneous realignment of the physical, mental and psychic bodies in preparation for spiritual awakening.

Moola bandha is both a means to attain sexual control, *brahmacharya*, and to alleviate a multitude of sexual disorders. It enables sexual energy to be directed either upward for spiritual development or downward to enhance marital relations. It helps to relieve sexual frustration, suppressed sexual energy and feelings of sexual guilt.

Practice note: Moola bandha is the contraction of specific muscles in the pelvic floor. It does not contract the whole perineum. In the male body, the area of contraction lies between the anus and the testes. In the female body, the point of contraction is behind the cervix, where the uterus projects into the vagina. Initially, if there is difficulty applying moola bandha due to lack of control over the muscles of the pelvic floor, ashwini mudra and vajroli mudras should be practised regularly in preparation for moola bandha.

Rules of the practice

The rules are to practise in solitude, observe silence and practise with effort. Why solitude? *Sugupto viralo bhootvaa mudraametaam samabhyaset*, because when one is removed from worldly attractions, mental stability is possible. The instruction to be alone has been given to help the practitioner remain unaffected by the external world.

Saadhayedyatnatastarhi maunee tu vijitaalasah, observing *mouna*, silence, conserves prana shakti. Constant talking leads to internal restlessness, scattering and lack of balance. Speech and sight are activities of the senses which dissipate inner energy. According to medical science, sixty percent of stimulating sensations originate from vision. The eyes look here and there, taking a constant stream of information to the brain. A great deal of inner energy is used to perceive,

categorize and analyze all this information. There is only awareness of visual information directly related to the present situation, but much more is actually being perceived. This process continues for sixteen hours a day. Only during sleep, when the eyes remain closed, are the sensations reduced.

It is the same with speech. Speech does not only mean talking. The mind also speaks through the medium of thoughts. Many types of speech are recognized in the yogic tradition. Yoga considers all kinds of internal manifestations as part of speech, including the expression of feelings. The practice of mouna is advocated for the simple reason that during mouna the expressions over which the individual has no control and which manage the personality are kept quiet.

The third instruction given is to practise moola bandha with effort, which means maintaining the state of concentration that is attained. In the beginning it may be held for only half a minute before the lock is released, but eventually one should have the capacity to maintain the bandha for fifteen to twenty minutes. Yogis have the capacity to maintain a position for hours at a time.

Of course, the bandha will have an effect even if it is only maintained for a minute or two, but the energy needed to awaken the brain and kundalini will not be generated by one or two minutes of practice. In order to enhance, activate and focus the energy, it is necessary to practise for as long as possible.

Kundalini

In addition to these three instructions, a fourth instruction needs to be added. Moola bandha should not be practised without the guidance of a guru. Negative changes in the personality begin to take place if the experience of energy comes from an incorrect method. Instead of progressing on the proper path, there can be a downfall. Therefore, such practices, which awaken the subtle energies within, should not be performed without the instructions and guidance of the guru.

Moola bandha is helpful in awakening kundalini. Kundalini shakti can be understood in many forms. One form is awakening the element of energy hidden inside mooladhara. The second form is awakening the brain centres related to mooladhara. The expansion or development of consciousness that then takes place on awakening mooladhara is regarded as a kundalini experience, because that state takes consciousness to a new *loka*, or dimension, which changes the thinking, conduct and karma.

The importance of moola bandha is also clearly stated in *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (3:66–69): “Apana moves up into the region of fire (manipura chakra), then the flames grow, being fanned by apana vayu. Then, when apana and the fire meet with prana, which is itself hot, the heat in the body is intensified. Through this extreme heat the sleeping kundalini is aroused and straightens itself just as a serpent beaten with a stick straightens and hisses. Just as a snake enters its hole, so kundalini goes into brahma nadi. Therefore, the yogi must always perform moola bandha.”

2. JALANDHARA BANDHA (throat lock)

Verses 10–11

कण्ठसंकोचनं कृत्वा चिबुकं हृदये न्यसेत् ।
जालन्धरेकृते बन्धे षोडशाधारबन्धनम् ॥ 10 ॥
जालन्धरमहामुद्रामृत्योश्च क्षयकारिणी ।
सिद्धो जालन्धरो बन्धो योगिनां सिद्धिदायकः ।
षण्मासमभ्यसेद्यो हि स सिद्धो नात्र संशयः ॥ 11 ॥

*Kanthalasankochanam kritvaa chibukam hridaye nyaset;
Jaalandharekrite bandhe shodashaadhaarabandhanam. (10)*

*Jaalandharamahaamudraamrityoshcha kshayakaarinee;
Siddho jaalandharo bandho yoginaam siddhidaayakah;
Shanmaasamabhyasedyo hi sa siddho naatra samshayah. (11)*

Contract the throat and place the chin on the chest. This becomes jalandhara bandha. It gives control over the sixteen bases. This great mudra by the name of jalandhara bandha gives victory over death. Mastery over jalandhara bandha provides siddhis to yogis and by practising it for just six months a yogi definitely becomes a perfected being.

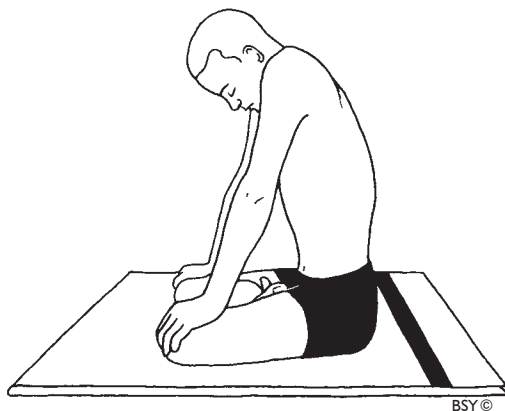
The body has sixteen *adharas*, bases or receptacles, and jalandhara bandha influences these bases. These sixteen bases can be understood in different ways. For example, they refer to major organs and parts of the body through which the various bodily activities are conducted and managed: toes, ankles, knees, thighs, perineum, genitals, navel region, heart, base of the neck, throat, root of the tongue, *nasikagra* (nosetip), *bhrumadhya* (eyebrow centre), forehead, *brahmarandhra* (top of the head) and crown. The throat region is locked by jalandhara bandha along with all the nadis and nerves that must pass through the throat to enter the head. Thus jalandhara bandha influences the entire body.

Vishuddhi is sometimes referred to as the middle chakra because it is the transition region between the manifest and unmanifest dimensions, as can be understood when meditating on its element, *akasha* or space. Vishuddhi chakra's sixteen petals relate directly to the adharas.

Sage Gheranda's description relates to the essential function of jalandhara bandha in awakening vishuddhi chakra and is close to the subtle kriya yoga variation. The usual hatha yoga variation with which one commences the practise of jalandhara is described below.

Technique

Sit in padmasana or siddha/siddha yoni asana with the head and spine straight. The knees should be in firm contact with the floor. Place the palms of the hands on the knees. Close the eyes and relax the whole body.



Inhale slowly and deeply, and retain the breath inside. While retaining the breath, contract the throat, bend the head forward and touch the chest with the chin at the point where the collar bones meet. Straighten the arms, pressing the knees down with the hands, simultaneously hunching the shoulders upward and forward. This will ensure that the arms stay locked, thus intensifying the pressure applied to the throat.

Stay in the final position for as long as the breath can be held comfortably. Do not strain.

To release, relax the shoulders, bend the arms, raise the head, slowly release the lock and then exhale. Repeat when the respiration has returned to normal.

Breathing: Initially the practice is performed with internal retention. Once the practice is perfected with internal breath retention, it may also be performed with external breath retention.

Duration: Jalandhara bandha can be held for as long as the breath can be retained comfortably, whether outside or inside. If there is a sensation of gasping for air as the bandha is released, reduce the length of retention so that the bandha can be released slowly and the breathing continues smoothly without strain. Gradually increase by counting the duration of retention in each round

and increasing the count by one. This practice may be repeated up to five times.

Sequence: If practised on its own, jalandhara bandha should be performed after asanas and pranayamas and before meditation. Once mastered, it is ideally performed in conjunction with pranayamas and mudras.

Precautions: Do not inhale or exhale until the chin lock and arm lock have been released and the head is fully upright. If any sensation of suffocation, fainting or dizziness is felt, immediately stop and rest. Once the sensation has passed, resume the practice.

Contra-indications: People suffering from cervical spondylitis, high intracranial pressure, vertigo, high blood pressure or heart disease should not practise jalandhara bandha. Although the neck lock reduces blood pressure initially, long retention of the breath strains the heart, resulting in discomfort in the heart region after the bandha is released. Refrain from the practice if vertigo or dizziness arises.

Benefits: This bandha closes the windpipe and compresses various organs in the throat. In particular, the stimulus to the throat helps to balance thyroid function and regulate the metabolism. The whole body depends on the thyroid gland for perfect development and maintenance. Jalandhara bandha massages and tones the thyroid gland, enhancing its efficacy. The thyroid and parathyroid glands are master glands located in the throat, and when they are regulated the whole metabolism is affected, which influences health and longevity.

The throat is also the region of vishuddhi chakra. When control over vishuddhi is achieved or vishuddhi chakra is awakened, according to kundalini yoga a state of immortality is attained, that is, victory over death. Here death does not mean physical death, which comes at the end of life. In this context death means control over the changes which take

place in the body. Sometimes during the course of sadhana, after the awakening of the chakras, a state is attained in which the physical body does not decline; this is called immortality. This state is attained only by *siddhas*, perfected persons.

In the context of sadhana this mantra says that jalandhara bandha can be perfected after six months continuous practice, and that if this is done, there is no doubt about attaining *siddhi*, perfection. The question arises, what sort of *siddhi*, mastery or state is achieved by the mere pressing of the neck and lowering of the chin?

It has been observed that if jalandhara bandha is done correctly, the physical feeling of a lock in the throat region or pressure created inside the brain and chest is not the only experience. This pressure influences the prana shakti. According to yoga, prana is energy which continuously flows upwards in the chest. The pressure created in the neck and chest during the practice of jalandhara bandha reverses the flow of prana shakti, making it flow downwards.

When prana shakti starts flowing downward and apana shakti starts flowing upward through the practice of another bandha, such as moola bandha or uddiyana bandha, both these energies meet at manipura chakra, resulting in a state of awakening in the chakra system of the body. This same kind of stimulus occurs in the brain, and a state of alertness dawns.

Even in normal practice, pressure or heaviness in the head is felt and this pressure activates ajna chakra and the dormant centre in the middle of the brain. Kriya shakti begins to flow in them and awakening occurs. In kundalini yoga the practice of jalandhara bandha is used specifically to change the speed of prana and to awaken vishuddhi, ajna, bindu and sahasrara chakras.

Immortality

Jaalandhara-mahaa-mudraa-mrityoshcha kshayakaarinee, the practice of jalandhara bandha brings victory over death. *Mrit* indicates death or mortality, *amrita* means not-death

or immortality. Kundalini yoga says that amrita, a nectar of immortality, is produced in the region of bindu visarga. Normally this travels through the throat into the body, but when this secretion is burned up and digested by the life processes, the body ages. The yogis, however, do not let this hormone go to manipura and it is not burned up in the digestive fire in the abdominal region. This prevents ageing, and gives victory over death.

This principle may appear a bit unnatural or imaginary, but according to medical science there is a gland in the bindu region which is equivalent to a pea in size, and its role in the overall functioning of the body is yet to be established. Once, scientists thought that after early childhood, and definitely after adolescence, the tasks and capacities of the brain were established and there was just a slow deterioration taking place from then on. However, along with stem cell research, the concepts and studies of neuroplasticity in the brain show that the body and brain can regenerate themselves in previously unthought of ways. At this stage there are still many differences of opinion regarding regeneration of brain cells and their interconnecting dendrites, but the claims of yoga are becoming more highly regarded. Perhaps one day research will 'discover' this mysterious nectar of immortality related to the ageing and regeneration of the physical body, thus proving the experience of the yogis to be true.

3. UDDIYANA BANDHA (abdominal contraction)

Verses 12–13

उदरे पश्चिमं तानं नाभिरूर्ध्वं तु कारयेत् ।
उड्डीनं कुरुते यस्मादविश्रान्तं महाखगः ।
उड्डीयानं त्वसौ बन्धो मृत्युमातङ्गकेसरी ॥ 12॥
समग्राद् बन्धनाद्धयेतदुड्डीयानं विशिष्यते ।
उड्डीयाने समभ्यस्ते मुक्तिः स्वाभाविकी भवेत् ॥ 13॥

*Udare pashchimam taanam naabhiroordhvam tu kaarayet;
Uddeenam kurute yasmaadavishraantam mahaakhagah;
Uddeeyaanam tvasau bandho mrityumaatangakesaree. (12)*

*Samagraad bandhanaaddhyetaduddeeyaanam vishishyate;
Uddeeyaane samabhyaste muktih svaabhaavikee bhavet. (13)*

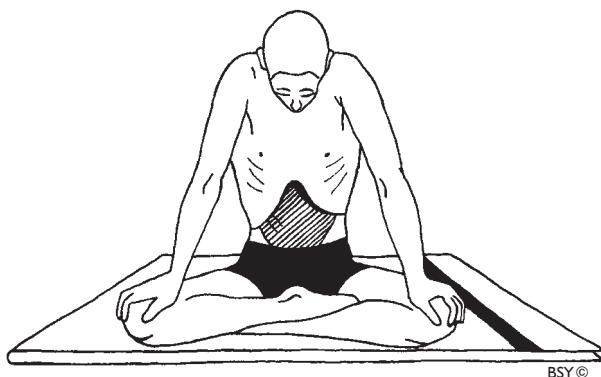
Contract the upper abdomen (above the navel) towards the back equally; as a result the great bird (prana) rises upward. It is called uddiyana bandha. It is the lion which challenges the elephant of death. Uddiyana bandha is the foremost bandha. One attains liberation easily by its practice.

Maha-khaga means the great bird. The image is used to describe prana flying upward due to the practice of uddiyana bandha. As we have seen in verse 6, the technique of uddiyana is incorporated in Sage Gheranda's description of moola bandha. Uddiyana bandha is the third of the essential bandhas in kundalini yoga.

Once more, Sage Gheranda's brief description targets the essential function of the bandha. A more detailed description of today's hatha yoga technique follows.

Technique

Sit in padmasana, siddhasana or siddha yoni asana. Keep the spine erect and the knees in contact with the floor. Place the palms of the hands flat on the knees. Close the eyes and relax the whole body.



Inhale deeply through the nostrils. Exhale fully through the mouth, emptying the lungs as much as possible. Hold the breath outside. Raise the shoulders, allowing further extension of the spinal cord. Lean forward and press down on the knees with the palms of the hands. Straighten the elbows. Do spontaneous jalandhara bandha. Contract the abdominal muscles, bringing the navel inward and upward.

Hold the abdominal lock with the breath out for as long as possible without straining. Release the abdominal lock, bend the elbows and lower the shoulders. Raise the head and then slowly inhale. When the respiration returns to normal, begin the next round.

During this bandha the muscles are contracted inward, thereby massaging the inner organs. Control over the diaphragm is increased, and when it is drawn upward, the abdomen is automatically raised as well. Uddiyana bandha not only pulls the abdomen inward but simultaneously upward, increasing the capacity for further contraction. This is the final position of uddiyana bandha.

Breathing: Uddiyana bandha is performed with external breath retention only. As the ability to retain the breath outside needs to be developed, mastery over agnisara kriya and pranayama is necessary. Normally, it is difficult

to hold the breath out for more than 15–20 seconds without a restless feeling developing. The final position should be held only for as long as the breath can be held comfortably.

It is said that uddiyana bandha is only perfected once the breath can be retained for three or four minutes.

Duration: Practise three rounds in the beginning and gradually increase to ten rounds over a few months as the system becomes accustomed to the practice.

Sequence: Uddiyana bandha is easier to perform if preceded by an inverted asana. It can also be performed in conjunction with pranayamas and mudras. If practised on its own, it should be performed after asanas and pranayamas and before meditation.

Precautions: Uddiyana bandha is an advanced technique and should be attempted only under the guidance of a competent teacher. It should be practised after attaining proficiency in external breath retention, and jalandhara and moola bandhas.

Agnisara kriya should be practised before attempting uddiyana bandha in order to develop control over the abdominal muscles. When agnisara can be performed without difficulty, there should be no difficulty doing uddiyana bandha.

Uddiyana bandha must always be practised on an empty stomach.

Contra-indications: People suffering from colitis, stomach or intestinal ulcers, diaphragmatic hernia, high blood pressure, heart disease, glaucoma and raised intracranial pressure should not perform this practice. It should also be avoided during pregnancy, but the practice is useful after delivery to strengthen the abdominal muscles and restore the abdomen to its original shape.

Benefits: Out of the sixteen adharas, one base, the navel region, is locked through this practice. Uddiyana bandha massages and tones all the abdominal organs, systematically balancing the adrenal glands, removing

lethargy and soothing anxiety and tension. Uddiyana bandha stimulates the digestive fire, and squeezes the stomach like a sponge so that stagnant fluids are pushed out, revitalizing the abdominal organs. It stimulates the function of the pancreas and liver. If the digestive system functions correctly, disorders will not manifest in the body.

In the final position of uddiyana bandha, the upward movement of the diaphragm exerts pressure on the lungs, massaging the entire respiratory system and enhancing the efficacy of the lungs. The heart is also massaged, helping to increase its efficiency. This bandha enhances the blood circulation throughout the body, and strengthens the internal organs. Uddiyana bandha stimulates the solar plexus which has many subtle influences on the distribution of energy throughout the body.

Liberation

This practice creates suction, which reverses the flow of apana and prana, uniting them with samana and stimulating manipura chakra. Uddiyana bandha increases the flow of prana towards sushumna nadi, resulting in increased awareness and creating a meditative state. Sage Gheranda also says that uddiyana bandha is the best of all the bandhas, *uddeeyaane samabhyaste muktih svaabhaavikee bhavet*, enabling one to naturally attain *mukti*, liberation.

This can be understood by turning to kundalini yoga. Briefly, it is said that when kundalini awakens and rises, the possibility remains that it will return to a dormant state, but once kundalini crosses manipura chakra there will be no return, no fall. Therefore, to cross manipura chakra is to open the door to liberation and remove obstacles in the journey towards liberation. With the practice of uddiyana bandha, manipura chakra is awakened and one crosses the threshold, leaving behind the possibility of kundalini falling back down.

4. MAHA BANDHA (the great lock)

Verses 14–16

वामपादस्य गुल्फेन पायुमूलं निरोधयेत् ।
दक्षपादेन तद्गुल्फं संपीड्य यत्नतः सुधीः ॥ 14 ॥
शनकैश्चालयेत्पार्ष्णि योनिमाकुञ्चयेच्छनैः ।
जालन्धरे धरेत्प्राणं महाबन्धो निगद्यते ॥ 15 ॥
महाबन्धः परो बन्धो जरामरण नाशनः ।
प्रसादादस्य बन्धस्य साधयेत्सर्ववाञ्छितम् ॥ 16 ॥

*Vaamapaadasya gulphena paayumoolam nirodhayet;
Dakshapaadena tadgulpham sampeedya yatnatah suddheeh. (14)*

*Shanakaishchaalayetpaarshni yonimaakunchayechchhanaih;
Jaalandhare dharetpraanam mahaabandho nigadyate. (15)*

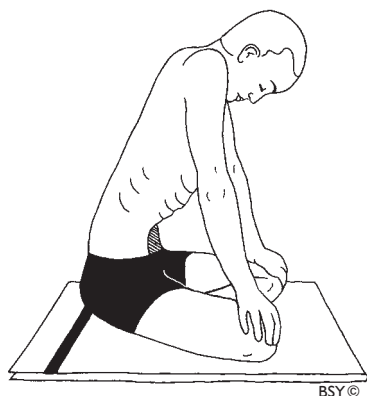
*Mahaabandhah paro bandho jaraamarana naashanah;
Prasaadaadasya bandhasya saadayetsarvavaanchhitam. (16)*

Close the anus with the left heel, press the left heel with the right foot with effort, slowly expand and contract the perineum and retain prana vayu through jalandhara bandha. This is called maha bandha. It is superior to all other bandhas and is the destroyer of old age and death. All desires are fulfilled by the grace of this bandha.

Sage Gheranda does not mention uddiyana bandha here, whereas today maha bandha is practised as the combination of the three bandhas: mooladhara, jalandhara and uddiyana. In this sense, Sage Gheranda is teaching a preliminary form of the practice now called maha bandha. His technique could be practised with internal or external retention.

When learning maha bandha today, the three bandhas are first practised as separate units, then incorporated one by one until maha bandha is achieved. A similar gradual process should be followed when incorporating these bandhas in the practice of pranayamas or other mudras. This should be a long and systematic process undertaken with expert guidance.

Practising moola bandha and jalandhara together has profound effects, and adding uddiyana bandha definitely transforms these bandhas into techniques for kundalini yoga, awakening energy and consciousness. In today's practice of maha bandha, moola bandha, uddiyana bandha and jalandhara bandha are simultaneously applied and therefore it is only practised with external breath retention. The modern technique is given here.



Technique

Sit in a meditative asana with the hands on the knees. The spine should be straight and the eyes and mouth closed. Breathe through the nose, inhale slowly and then exhale completely. Successively perform jalandhara, uddiyana and moola bandhas in this order while retaining the breath outside. In this practice the main emphasis is on external breath retention. The longer the breath is retained, the more effective the practice.

Hold the bandhas and the breath for as long as is comfortable without straining. Then release moola bandha, uddiyana bandha and finally jalandhara bandha in this order. Inhale deeply and allow the breath to return to normal. This is one round of maha bandha.

Awareness: On the three related chakras: vishuddhi, manipura and mooladhara.

Precautions: Maha bandha should not be attempted until the other three bandhas have been mastered.

Contra-indications: People suffering from high or low blood pressure, heart conditions, stroke, hernia, stomach or intestinal ulcer, and those recovering from any visceral ailment should avoid this practice. Pregnant women should not attempt this practice. It is again repeated that this practice should not be undertaken without guidance.

Benefits: This practice is important for awakening the chakras, particularly mooladhara, manipura and vishuddhi. Its physical and mental benefits are similar to those achieved by moola bandha, uddiyana bandha and jalandhara bandha practised separately. It affects the hormonal secretions of the pineal gland and regulates the entire endocrine system. The decaying, degenerative and ageing processes are checked and every cell of the body is rejuvenated.

In the beginning this practice appears to be difficult, but gradually as the duration of external breath retention increases, it becomes easier and a blissful experience is attained.

Variation: In kundalini yoga, maha bandha can be strengthened, once the basic practice is mastered, by rotating the consciousness through the affected chakras during breath retention, and mentally repeating their names.

Firstly, take the consciousness to mooladhara and mentally repeat ‘mooladhara’, remaining aware of mooladhara for a few moments. Then bring the consciousness to manipura and mentally repeat ‘manipura’. Finally, bring the consciousness to vishuddhi and mentally repeat ‘vishuddhi’. Then return the awareness to mooladhara and repeat the cycle – mooladhara – manipura – vishuddhi.

At the end of retention, the component bandhas are systematically released as described above. Do not strain or hold the breath so long that the release sequence becomes rushed.

Duration: Once proficiency is attained, increase by one round over a period of time until nine rounds can be performed.

Benefits: This practice soothes anger and introverts the mind prior to meditation. When perfected, it can fully awaken prana in all the main chakras. It leads to the merger of prana, apana and samana in *agni mandala*, the region of fire, which culminates in the awakening of prana.

Pancha Dharana

FIVE CONCENTRATION PRACTICES

The term *mudra* has been explained as a physical and psychic gesture with far reaching effects on mind, body, emotions and prana, in fact on the whole psyche. When practised regularly, mudras influence the attitudes deeply and are tools for spiritual awakening. Within the broad category of mudras, Sage Gheranda has included bandhas and dharanas. As already discussed, bandhas are mudras with a specific 'locking' function. The five concentration practices or *dharanas* he also includes focus and lock the prana and awareness on a specific point or quality, using psychic rather than physical tools.

Sage Gheranda has described these five concentration practices, *pancha dharana*, under the category of mudra, but actually he is explaining one of the basic principles of kundalini yoga. The dharanas are advanced practices and require some knowledge of the use of mantras and yantras according to the kundalini yoga tradition just from the 'mechanical' point of view. One also has to prepare one's consciousness. Traditionally, these techniques can actually be used only after some success in the practice of shambhavi mudra, as will be seen later.

I. PARTHIVI DHARANA (concentration on earth)

Verses 17–18

यत्तत्त्वं हरितालदेशरचितं भौमं लकारान्वितं,
वेदास्रं कमलासनेनसहितं कृत्वा हृदिस्थापितम् ।
प्राणान्तत्र विलीय पञ्चघटिकाश्चित्तान्वितं धारयेत् ।
ऐषा स्तम्भकरी सदा क्षितिजयं कुर्यादधोधारणा ॥ 17॥
पार्थिवीधारणामुद्रां यः करोति तु नित्यशः ।
मृत्युञ्जयः स्वयं सोऽपि स सिद्धो विचरेद्भुवि ॥ 18॥

*Yattatvam haritaaladesharachitam bhaumam lakaaraanvitam,
Vedaasram kamalaasanasahitam kritvaa hridisthaapitam;
Praanam tatra vileeya panchaghatikaashchittaanvitam dhaarayet;
Aishaa stambhakaree sadaa kshitijayam kuryaadadhodhaaranaa. (17)*

*Paarthiveedhaaranaamudraam yah karoti tu nityashah;
Mrityunjayah svayam so'pi sa siddho vicharedbhuvi. (18)*

The colour of the earth element is yellow like orpiment (a yellow mineral used as a pigment), the bija or seed mantra is *Lam* लं, it is square in shape and Brahma is the God. Manifest it with the yogic power, retain it in the heart and hold the prana there up to five ghati (about two hours). It is known as parthivi mudra or adhodharana mudra. After mastering it, a practitioner becomes the conqueror of the earth. One who practises prithvi dharana wins over death and wanders over the earth as a siddha, a perfected person.

In this first verse the *yantra*, or geometrical blueprint, of earth is referred to. It can be understood that Sage Gheranda is speaking to people he assumes understand the science of *tattwas*, the essences or elements. He refers to the earth element as yellow like *hartal*, a chemical made from sulphur and arsenic. It is square in shape, all its sides being equal. It is to be retained in the heart, which means deep inside, and the practitioner has to be aware of its *bija*, seed, mantra *Lam* लं.

Kundalini yoga can be used as the basis for understanding this verse. Mooladhara chakra, which is related to the earth element, is a four-petalled lotus. On each of these four petals a mantra is written: *Vam वं, Sham शं, Sham षं, Sam सं*. In the centre of the lotus is a yellow square, which is the yantra, symbol or diagram of the earth element. In the centre of this yellow square there is an inverted triangle with its apex pointing down. Within this inverted triangle there is a *shivalinga*, a symbol of Shiva or consciousness, which is called the *swayambhu linga*, the self-illuminated symbol. A serpent, representing the dormant kundalini, is coiled around it three and a half times. All these symbols are contained in mooladhara chakra.

The practice of concentrating on the earth element, *parthivi dharana*, more commonly called *prithvi dharana*, is an attempt to awaken mooladhara chakra through meditation and concentration. It is said in this mantra that the *ishta devata*, the chosen deity, of mooladhara chakra is Lord Brahma, whose function is to create. The process of creation commences with the earth element. Whether it is vegetation, a mountain, a stone, an animal, a bird or a human being, everything is created out of *prithvi tattwa*, the earth element. There is also the goddess of the skin, of the sense of touch, whose name is Dakini. Brahma and Dakini are the controllers of mooladhara chakra. Instructions are given to imagine or concentrate on the earth element in the heart during the practice, *hridisthaapitam*. Here *hrid* does not mean the physical heart; rather it means focusing the *antahkarana*, inner tools of consciousness, on the yantra.

Technique

Sit in a meditative posture, close the eyes, become still, and be aware of the breath. Focus the mind on the yantra of prithvi tattwa, the earth element. Visualize the bright yellow square and move the awareness along the four even sides of the square. Feel its characteristic stability and strength and solidity. Experience the fragrance of

लं

earth. Feel your own connection with the earth and feel yourself drawn to the attractive bright yellow square of its yantra.

Begin to feel or hear or repeat mentally the mantra of prithvi tattwa, which is *Lam* लं. See the mantra *Lam* लं in the centre of the square. It is the

Sanskrit letter written in *Devanagari*, the script of the gods, or the script of light.

The seed mantra of the yantra of prithvi tattwa is *Lam* लं. Be aware of it like a pulse beat. During meditation this yantra, along with the mantra *Lam* लं, is retained in the consciousness. Also be aware of the other characteristics of earth and feel them as part of your own nature. Feel the essential unity of yourself and all beings with the mother earth, and feel the benevolence of the element earth.

Be aware of the *laya*, the rhythm of the breath, as you dwell in the earth element. Be aware of the natural pause at the end of each inhalation, and let it gradually lengthen. Prana is to be retained inside.

To end the practice, disengage the mind from the mantra *Lam* लं and from the yantra of the earth element.

Be aware of the solidity and shape of the physical body. Be aware of the natural breath and its rhythm. Feel the energy flowing in the body with the breath. Be aware of the surroundings and the time of day. When you have extroverted, open the eyes and release the posture.

Breathing: This dharana can be practised with *pooraka*, breathing in, and holding the breath inside. Let this develop naturally without strain. First be aware of the natural pause at the end of each inhalation, and let it gradually lengthen.

Preparation: Any kind of dharana practice is incomplete until mastery over pranayama is achieved. Initially ujjayi breathing is taught, observing the breath moving up and down the spine between mooladhara and the

top of the spine. In the beginning the only aim is to gradually achieve control over the breath. After three or four months, holding the breath for up to one minute is practised. Thus the capacity of the body is increased little by little. In this way, the goal can finally be achieved.

With expert guidance moorcha pranayama can be incorporated. The breath is retained for up to three or four minutes during part of the practice. Advanced practitioners just relax and watch the spontaneous flow or stoppage of the breath. The prana is to be retained inside.

Duration: Begin with short practices of five or twenty minutes, however long the practice can be maintained with an alert awareness and a witnessing attitude. Eventually the practice of dharana, concentration, can be done for approximately two hours.

Remember that this practice is not perfected in a day. Yogis keep doing a practice continuously for years; only then is mastery or perfection of the practice attained. The technique explained here is a formal technique, a final position. It is not possible to inhale deeply and retain the prana inside on the very first day. In order to retain the prana inside for up to two hours, it is imperative to have mastered pranayama prior to the practice.

Precautions: It is believed in yoga that one lifetime is probably not adequate to perfect a *sadhana* or practice. These techniques should be practised slowly and only under the guidance of a competent teacher. If force is applied, the responsibility is not that of yoga or the teacher.

Benefits: Sage Gheranda says that a sadhaka who has gained mastery over prithvi dharana achieves victory over death and all the merits and demerits of prithvi tattwa, and wanders on this earth without any worries. The *Yogatattwa Upanishad* also says that whosoever gains mastery over this practice achieves victory over the merits and demerits of the earth element.

2. AMBHASI DHARANA (concentration on water)

Verses 19–21

शङ्खेन्दुप्रतिमं च कुन्दधवलं तत्त्वं किलालं शुभं ।
तत्पीयूषवकारबीजसहितं युक्तं सदा विष्णुना ।
प्राणं तत्र विलीय पञ्च घटिकाश्चित्तान्वितां धारयेत् ।
एषा दुःसहतापपापहरिणीस्यादाम्भसी धारणा ॥ 19 ॥
आम्भसीं परमां मुद्रां यो जानाति स योगवित् ।
जले च घोरे गंभीरे मरणं तस्यनोभवेत् ॥ 20 ॥
इयं तु परमा मुद्रा गोपनीया प्रयत्नतः ।
प्रकाशात्सिद्धिहानिः स्यात्सत्यं वच्मि च तत्त्वतः ॥ 21 ॥

Shankhendupratimam cha kundadhavalam tattvam kilaalam shubham;

*Tatpeeyooshavakaarabeejasahitam yuktam sadaa vishnunaa;
Praanam tatra vileeya pancha ghatikaashchittaanvitaam dhaarayet;
Eshaa duhsahataapapaapaharineesyadaambhasee dhaaranaa. (19)*

*Aambhaseem paramaam mudraam yo jaanaati sa yogavit;
Jale cha ghore gambheere maranam tasyanobhavel. (20)*

*Iyam tu paramaa mudraa gopaneeyaa prayatnatah;
Prakaashaatsiddhihaanihsyaatsatyam vachmi cha tattvatah. (21)*

The colour of water is bright white like that of a conch, moon or lotus. Its bija mantra is *Vam वं* and its god is Lord Vishnu. Retaining the focus on this element in the heart, become one-pointed and hold the prana by kumbhaka up to five ghata (about two hours). This mudra is known by the name of ambhasi dharana. Leaving aside all worries, breathe in deeply, retain the breath up to five ghata and meditate on the water element. Meditate on the merits, demerits, yantra and symbol of the water element. By this dharana all the pains, heat and sins of a human being are destroyed, i.e. internal heat and excitement are finished. By doing this practice, no harm can come to a person even in deep water. It is an important mudra and it is imperative to keep it secret. If a practitioner describes

this practice to others or discloses this technique, then his siddhi is destroyed. This is the truth.

According to kundalini yoga, swadhisthana chakra is related to *jala tattwa*, the water element. The vehicle of this chakra is a crocodile, which is considered to be the vehicle of Varuna, the water god. The symbols of this chakra include a crescent moon and above the crescent moon, ocean, and above the ocean, the night sky, in which there is once again a small moon and stars. The light of this moon is illuminating the water of the ocean. Its bija mantra is *Vam* वं.

It is said that swadhisthana chakra is the symbol of the unconscious state. Yoga regards the unconscious mind as extensive, large and deep like an ocean, the depth and limit of which no one has been able to gauge. The light of the night sky over the ocean is not the light of knowledge or the ray of discrimination or wisdom or feeling. In the symbol, a small form of the moon is shown in the sky. This moon, with the stars in the sky, is considered to be a symbol of mental energy. This mental energy, *manas shakti* or *chitta shakti*, illuminates the unconscious state itself. Above the crescent moon the mantra *Vam* वं is inscribed. Retaining both yantra and mantra in the heart, the innermost centre, the prana is to be retained inside for about two hours.

According to yoga, samskaras and karmas manifest strongly in the unconscious mind, as it is their *karmakshetra*, or field of activity. It is their place of origin and storehouse. When the need for something is felt, it comes up in the conscious state. When karmas and samskaras manifest strongly inside, tumbling and disrupting the life of a sadhaka so that one becomes scattered and can scarcely control one's life, then this dharana is practised. It is not done all the time.

Prior to practising this dharana it is imperative to quieten the modifications of the mind in chitta. The first step is to understand and calm down the thoughts, feelings and modifications of mind which emerge in the conscious state and play out their roles. Next, one should try to understand

the subconscious by getting to know the mental actions and reactions that take place in the subconscious state of mind. Only once the conscious and the subconscious are completely purified and are under control, when only samskaras and karmas remain, is this practice of dharana on swadhisthana chakra undertaken.

There is also a hint about this dharana in the *Yoga Sutras* of Patanjali. This dharana is practised in order to achieve *nirbija avastha*, the seedless state. This means that when one achieves control over the modifications of mind, intellect and chitta in the right manner, only samskaras remain. Then one also starts exhausting samskaras, making them rootless. It is at that time that *ambhasi dharana*, concentration on the water element, *jala* or *apas tattwa*, spontaneously takes place.

Technique

Sit in a meditative posture, become still and be aware of the breath. Close the eyes. Focus the mind on a crescent moon, the yantra of *apas tattwa*, the water element. Visualize the bright silvery-white crescent moon and move the awareness around its curved outline. Feel the characteristic transparent fluidity of water. Recall its pure refreshing taste. Feel your own connection with it and feel yourself attracted to the bright crescent moon of its yantra.

Begin to feel or hear or repeat mentally the mantra of *apas tattwa* which is *Vam वं*. See the mantra *Vam वं* shining in the light of the centre of the crescent moon.



Be aware of the seed mantra of the yantra of *apas tattwa* *Vam वं* like a pulse beat. Retain the yantra and mantra in the centre of your awareness. Be aware of the other characteristics of water also and feel them as part of your own nature. Feel the essential unity of yourself and all beings with the life-giving

water element, and feel the benevolence of the water element.

Be aware of the laya, the rhythm of the breath, like the waves of the ocean as you dissolve in the water element. Be aware of the natural pause at the end of each inhalation, and let it gradually lengthen. Prana is to be retained inside.

To end the practice, disengage the mind from the mantra *Vam वै* and from the yantra of the water element. Be aware of the earth element which is part of your own nature. Be aware of the solidity and shape of your physical body. Be aware of how you are feeling and check that you are awake and conscious of the outside world. Be aware of the natural breath and its rhythm. Feel the energy flowing in the body with the breath. Be aware of the surroundings and the time of day. Gently open the eyes.

Breathing: This dharana can be practised with pooraka, breathing in, and holding the breath inside. Let this develop naturally without strain. First be aware of the natural pause at the end of each inhalation, and let it gradually lengthen. Let mastery of the breath develop naturally as in prithvi dharana.

Preparation: It is essential to first of all understand and expand the awareness into the conscious and sub-conscious states of mind. Practising yoga nidra on a regular basis helps to purify the conscious and subconscious states, releasing samskaras that bubble to the surface of the mind as one relaxes. Gradually one comes to know the mental actions and reactions that take place in the subconscious state of mind. Only once the attitude of witnessing the samskaras and karmas becomes an established part of the personality can this practice of dharana on swadhisthana chakra be beneficially undertaken for extended periods of time.

Duration: Begin with short practices of five minutes or twenty minutes, however long the practice can be maintained with alert awareness and a witnessing attitude.

Eventually the practice of dharana, concentration, can be done for up to two hours.

Precautions: These verses say that it is imperative to keep this practice secret. Why is this said? It is an important practice that involves looking into the depths of the mind. If one forces oneself prematurely into the practice, the responsibility lies with the practitioner, not the technique. These techniques should be practised slowly and proper guidance should be followed. Without first mastering the technique, how can guidance be given to others with whom the technique may be shared? What is given here is an outline of the practice, a few words lashed together like a raft suitable for sailing in a serene lake. To cross the ocean a fully equipped vessel is needed and the instructions of the ship's captain have to be followed as the weather changes.

Benefits: Sage Gheranda says that by doing this practice, a special affinity with water and with all the merits and demerits of apas tattwa is attained. A sadhaka who has gained mastery over ambhasi dharana annihilates all the pains and sins of a human being; the internal heat and excitement are also finished.

Lord Vishnu is the deity of this dharana. The function of Lord Vishnu is to rear, nurture or sustain. Who or what looks after one's personality? It is taken care of by samskaras and karmas alone. Therefore, the karmas and samskaras which take care of and determine one's life and character are the Vishnu tattwa, and he is considered to be the presiding deity or ruler of this dharana.

3. AGNEYI DHARANA (concentration on fire)

Verses 22–23

यन्नाभिस्थितमिन्द्रगोपसदृशं बीजं त्रिकोणान्वितं
तत्त्वं वह्निमयं प्रदीप्तमरुणं रुद्रेण यत्सिद्धिदम् ।
प्राणं तत्र विलीय पञ्चघटिकाश्चित्तान्वितं धारयेत्
एषा कालगभीरभीतिहरिणी वैश्वानरी धारणा ॥22॥
प्रदीप्ते ज्वलिते वह्नौ पतितो यदि साधकः ।
एतन्मुद्रा प्रसादेन स जीवति न मृत्युभाक् ॥23॥

*Yannaabhisthitamindragopasadrisham beejam trikonaanvitam,
Tattvam vahnimayam pradeeptamarunam rudrena
yatsiddhidam;*

*Praanam tatra vileeya panchaghatikaashchittaانvitam dhaarayet
Eshaa kaalagabbeerabheetiharinnee vaishvaanaree dhaaranaa. (22)*

*Pradeepte jvalite vahnau patito yadi saadhakah;
Etanmudraa prasaadana sa jeevati na mrityubhaak. (23)*

The region of fire is the navel region. Its colour is red. Its yantra is a triangle. Its mantra is *Ram* रं and its deity is Rudra. This fire element is full of streaming light, lustre, radiance and is the provider of siddhi, perfection. Manifesting it by yogic power, retain the prana with one-pointedness for five ghata (about two hours). By practising it, fear of death, vanishes and no harm is done by fire. It is called vaishvanari dharana. If a sadhaka falls into a raging fire, he will not die due to the powerful effect of this mudra.

There is a basic similarity in all the practices of dharana described here. Further, in all these practices instructions have been given to practise kumbhaka for up to five ghata (about two hours). For this amount of continuous practice to be possible, mastery of pranayama is essential. Fire is called *agni* or *vahni*, Sage Gheranda refers to this concentration practice as *vaishvani dharana*.

Technique

Sit in a meditative posture, become still and be aware of the breath and the energy flowing with the breath. Focus the mind on the yantra of *agni tattwa*, the fire element. Visualize the bright red inverted triangle. As you look closely you will see three short *bhopura*, walls like fire-guards that protect each side of the triangle. Move the awareness around the three sides. Repeat or hear mentally the mantra of agni tattwa, which is *Ram ॠ*. See the mantra *Ram ॠ* shining in the centre of the fiery red light of the inverted triangle.

See the beauty of fire and its characteristic heat. Recall the pure bright light of fire flames giving light and warmth when seen calmly with a witnessing attitude, scorching anything attached. Feel your own connection with it and feel yourself attracted to the bright light of its yantra.

Be aware of the seed mantra of the yantra of agni tattwa, *Ram ॠ*, like the beat of the dancing flames. Retain this yantra and mantra in the centre of your awareness. Be aware of the other characteristics of fire also and feel them as part of your own nature, transforming your nature and anything it comes in contact with. Be aware of the power of transformation, the essential characteristic of the fire element.

Be aware of the rhythm of the breath, the natural pause at the end of each inhalation, the beginning, end and re-birth of each breath. The prana is to be retained inside. To end the practice, disengage the mind from the mantra *Ram ॠ* and from the yantra of the fire element. Be aware of the water element, which is also part of your own nature. Be aware of how you are feeling. Be aware of the surroundings and be ready to adjust to them and learn. Be aware of the earth element, which is part of



your own nature. Be aware of the solidity and shape of your physical body. Be aware of how you are feeling and check that you are awake and conscious of the outside world. Be aware of the natural breath and its rhythm. Feel the energy flowing in the body with the breath. Be aware of the surroundings and the time of day. Gently open the eyes.

Preparation: First practise prithvi and apas dharanas to maintain a healthy balance in external life. It is essential to be able to maintain a witnessing attitude. A practitioner should be established in a pure light sattwic diet.

Breathing: This dharana can be practised with pooraka, breathing in, and holding the breath inside. Let this develop naturally without strain. First be aware of the natural pause at the end of each inhalation, and let it gradually lengthen. Let mastery of the breath develop naturally as in the other dharana.

Duration: Begin with short practices of five minutes or twenty minutes, however long the practice can be maintained with alert awareness and a witnessing attitude. Eventually adepts can practise this dharana for up to two hours.

Precautions: These techniques should be practised slowly with proper guidance. Do not practise agni dharana if unwell, feverish physically, or suffering from too much anger emotionally. Do not practise in hot summer months.

Benefits: By doing this practice one achieves a special affinity with fire and all the merits and demerits of agni tattwa.

Kundalini yoga

According to kundalini yoga, manipura chakra is related to agni tattwa. The yantra of agni tattwa is an inverted red triangle and the mandala of manipura chakra contains an inverted red triangle with a picture of Surya, the sun

god, in the centre. Its vehicle is a ram. Manipura chakra is considered to be a centre of prana shakti. Even in the gross form when food is eaten, digestion takes place in the manipura region. In the subtle state, too, awakening or purification of prana takes place with the awakening of manipura chakra. This chakra is responsible for the activity of the personality, the life force and dynamism. Along with their opposite characteristics, such as laziness, depression, sluggishness, etc., these are the merits and demerits of manipura chakra.

The practice of agni dharana with concentration on the yantra, mandala and characteristics of agni is to be done internally, in the heart or antahkarana. An experienced practitioner can hold the concentration for up to two hours. When the practice is perfected, there is no fear of death. When the siddhi of agni tattwa is achieved, even if a sadhaka enters into a blazing fire, he achieves victory over death.

Prana vidya

In kundalini yoga it is believed that there are three main centres of prana inside the body. The first centre is mooladhara, where prana manifests or originates, the second centre is manipura, where prana is collected, and the third centre is ajna chakra, where prana is distributed. There is a technique in yoga called prana vidya which uses this principle. Prana vidya is a pranic healing process. If any part or organ of the body suffers from disease, then by psychically directing the flow of prana, that organ can be made healthy if one has mastery of prana vidya.

In the application of prana vidya, treatment is given through the medium of prana, with the flow of awakened prana piercing any blockages to prana. Not many people with full knowledge or expertise in this technique are left or available today. Normal people, however, can practise this technique on themselves and feel the benefits.

In this process, the feeling of the prana inside the body is like an electric flow or current. It feels as if this current

is running inside the entire body. One can work directly from manipura. Alternatively, a practitioner brings this prana from mooladhara to ajna chakra and when the prana is concentrated in ajna chakra, there is an experience of heaviness in the head, and a tingling sensation begins. Then, when the prana is distributed to the other parts of the body by means of the breath and concentration, one feels or sees the sensation of energy actually travelling from ajna chakra to the part of the body targeted by the practice. At the end of the practice the prana that was being experienced should be brought back and deposited in mooladhara.

Fire

Manipura chakra is the storage centre of prana. The symbol of this energy or power is the Sun god. The ishta is Rudra, a form of Shiva – *rudra* means one who acquires a fierce form. Until prana shakti is under control, it remains in a fierce form. When prana is awakened inside, it is possible for this shakti or energy to assume the form of a furious fire and burn the body and mind.

The point is that prana exists in the body in the form of fierce energy. When control is achieved over prana by means of consciousness, then this prana grants all types of siddhis and energies by coming under the control of the practitioner. However, if it is uncontrolled, the person becomes like Bhasma-asura, a demon, meaning that he becomes responsible for reducing himself to ashes. Therefore, do not practise these tattwa dharanas without a competent guide.

4. VAYVIYE DHARANA (concentration on air)

Verses 24–26

यद्धिन्नाञ्जनपुञ्जसंनिभमिदं धूम्रावभासं परं,
तत्त्वं सत्त्वमयं यकारसहितं यत्रेश्वरो देवता ।
प्राणं तत्र विलीय पञ्चघटिकाश्चित्तान्वितं धारयेत् ।
एषा खे गमनं करोति यामिनां स्याद्वायवी धारणा ॥ 24 ॥
इयं तु परमा मुद्रा जरामृत्युविनाशिनी ।
वायुनाभ्रियते नापि खे च गतिप्रदायिनी ॥ 25 ॥
शठाय भक्तिहीनाय न देयं यस्यकस्यचित् ।
दत्ते च सिद्धिहानिः स्यात्सत्यं वच्मि च चण्ड ते ॥ 26 ॥

*Yadhinnaanjanapunjasannibhamidam dhoomraavabhaasam param,
Tattvam sattvamayam yakaarasahitam yatreshvaro devataa;
Praanam tatra vileeya panchaghatikaashchittaanvitam dhaarayet;
Eshaa khe gamanam karoti yaaminaam syaadvaayavee dhaaranaa.*
(24)

*Iyam tu paramaa mudraa jaraamrityuvinaashinee;
Vaayunaabhriyate naapi khe cha gatipradaayinee.* (25)

*Shathaaya bhaktiheenaaya na deyam yasyakasyachit;
Datte cha siddhihaanih syaatsatyam vachmi cha chanda te.* (26)

The colour of *vayu*, air, is light black like that of collyrium or smoke. Its bija mantra is *Yam* यं. This tattwa has sattwic properties. Having manifested it by yogic power, retain the prana *vayu* up to two hours with one-pointedness. With the practice of this mudra, by the name of *vayviye dharana*, a sadhaka achieves the power to travel in space and cannot die due to air. This major mudra destroys old age and death and enables one to fly in space. This dharana should never be disclosed to an undevoted and wicked person. By doing so, *siddhi* is destroyed. My above statement is true.

According to kundalini yoga, anahata chakra relates to *vayu tattwa*, the air element. The yantra of *vayu tattwa* is made

up of two interlacing triangles. The apex of one triangle is pointing upward while the other one is inverted. At the centre is the bija mantra of this yantra, *Yam* यं.

Anahata chakra has a jyoti like a candle flame burning in the centre of these interlaced triangles, and its light is spreading all around, up and down, right and left; four rays of light are emanating. This chakra is related to feelings and experiences. Dual feelings manifest inside, love and compassion and also ill-feeling and anger. Anahata chakra has a link with the subconscious mental state in one's life. The reactions that originate in the subconscious mind influence anahata. The main thing in anahata chakra is to achieve control over the feelings, whether positive or negative. When complete control over feeling, experience and behaviour is achieved, anahata chakra awakens. If internal feelings are even a little out of control, anahata chakra cannot be awakened. Therefore, it is imperative that the antahkarana is pure for the awakening of this chakra.

The same method is followed in this technique as for the previous tattwas. Ishwara is the ishta devata here. The three deities of the previous three tattwas: Brahma, Vishnu and Rudra, the trinity, are respectively the creator, sustainer and destroyer of the entire creation. In this practice, however, the deity is Ishwara, so the instruction is to practise vayviye dharana, keeping that divine quality in mind. *Ishwara* represents that divine eternal existence or element which is indestructible and imperishable. It is that aspect which is contemplated for two hours along with the mantra and yantra of the air element.

Technique

Sit in a meditative posture, become still and be aware of the breath and the energy flowing with the breath. Focus the mind on the yantra of vayu tattwa, the air element. Visualize two interlaced triangles as in anahata chakra. As you look closely, focus on the six points of the hexagonal shape that they form. These are like atoms of



air, ready to fly apart yet constrained in the formation of the yantra. Move the awareness to each point and repeat or hear mentally the mantra of *vayu tattwa*, which is *Yam यं*. See the mantra *Yam यं* shining in the centre of the six blue points of the interlaced triangles.

Be aware of the characteristics of air, aware of the touch of air against the skin, aware of the breath as you breathe in and out, aware of the expansiveness and life-giving qualities of air. Be aware of the seed mantra *Yam यं* of *vayu tattwa*, the air element, as you breathe in and out. Witness the connection of all living creatures, and yourself, with the air element, *vayu*. Feel yourself merging with it, attracted to its yantra and mantra.

Retain this yantra and mantra in the centre of your awareness. Be aware of the other characteristics of air also and feel them as part of your own self. Be aware of the rhythm of the breath, the natural pause at the end of each inhalation, the beginning, end and rebirth of each breath.

To end the practice, disengage the mind from the mantra *Yam यं* and from the yantra of the air element. Be aware of the other elements which are part of your nature. Be aware of how you are feeling. Be aware of the surroundings. Be aware of your physical body. Check that you are awake and conscious of the outside world. Be aware of the natural breath and its rhythm. Feel the energy flowing in the body with the breath. Check that you are aware of the surroundings and the time of day. Gently open the eyes.

Preparation: It is essential to be able to maintain a witnessing attitude. *Yoga nidra*, *chidakasha dharana* and *hridayakasha dharana* are all helpful practices.

Breathing: Let mastery of the breath develop naturally as in the other *dharanas*.

Duration: Begin with short practices of five minutes or twenty minutes, however long the practice can be maintained with alert awareness and a witnessing attitude. Eventually adepts can practise this dharana for up to two hours.

Precautions: These techniques should be practised slowly with proper guidance. Do not practise vayviye dharana if emotionally unwell. This is not a therapeutic technique, rather it is to explore one's inner nature once relative balance and clarity have been achieved.

Benefits: The verse states that from this practice a sadhaka attains the power (shakti) to travel in air and does not die due to any situations created by air. One who achieves complete control over vayu tattwa destroys old age and death. In the practice of each dharana it is said that by practising this dharana, old age and death are destroyed, or won over. The secret behind this statement is that by attaining one siddhi, other siddhis are automatically acquired; for example, vayviye dharana leads to the awakening of anahata chakra and eventual freedom from emotional turmoil.

5. AKASHI DHARANA (concentration on space or ether)

Verses 27–28

यत्सिन्द्रौ वरशुद्धवारिसदृशं व्योमाख्यमुद्भासते
तत्त्वं देवसदाशिवेन सहितं बीजं हकारान्वितम् ।
प्राणं तत्र विलीय पञ्चघटिकाश्चित्तान्वितं धारयेत्
एषा मोक्षकपाटभेदनकरी कुर्यान्नभोधारणा ॥ 27 ॥
आकाशीधारणां मुद्रां यो वेत्ति स योगवित् ।
न मृत्युर्जायते तस्य प्रलये नावसीदति ॥ 28 ॥

*Yatsinddhau varashuddhavaarisadrisham vyomaakhyamudbhaasate,
Tattvam devasadaashivena sahitam beejam hakaaraanvitam;
Praanam tatra vileeya panchaghatikaashchittaanvitam dhaarayet,
Eshaa mokshakapaatabhedanakaree kuryaannabhodhaaranaa. (27)*

*Aakaasheedhaaranaam mudraam yo veti sa yogavit;
Na mrityurjaayate tasya pralaye naavaseedati. (28)*

The colour of akasha tattwa, the ether element, is like the pure water of the ocean. Its bija mantra is *Ham* हं and its deity is Sadashiva. This nabhodharana mudra is perfected by retaining prana vayu for up to two hours, with a peaceful mind – it then opens the gate to liberation. A yogi who knows akashi dharana does not fall prey to death and does not perish even during pralaya (cosmic destruction).

According to kundalini yoga, vishuddhi chakra is related to *akasha tattwa*, the ether or space element. It is also a symbol of the pure state of consciousness. In the four lower chakras one faces impure states of consciousness: disorders, feelings, uncontrolled energy, fear, insecurity, etc. All these are impure states related to life. On reaching vishuddhi chakra, the barriers and borders of antahkarana (whether it is mind, intellect, chitta or ahamkara) are crossed and a pure conscious state of being is attained.

The symbol of vishuddhi chakra is a circle and inside it is a drop of water. The colour of the circle is like the dark

blue colour of the sea and in its centre is a drop of white. Its bija mantra is *Ham* हं. Its deity is Sadashiva. *Shiva* means benevolent one or auspicious one. That power by which one always achieves benevolence and auspiciousness, is Sadashiva. This practice is also known as nabho dharana.

Technique

Sit in a meditative posture, become still and be aware of the breath and the energy flowing with the breath. The eyes are closed. Focus the mind on the yantra of akasha tattwa, the space element. Visualize a circle which has no beginning or end and is



the yantra of infinite space. As you look closely, see a multitude of multi-coloured points, like atoms that can only exist within space. Repeat or hear mentally the mantra of akasha tattwa, which is ham. See the mantra *Ham* हं shining in the centre of the dark circle composed of an infinite number of multi-coloured points.

Be aware of the characteristics of space, which is on the edge of manifestation and the unmanifest. Be aware of the expansiveness of space. Be aware of the seed mantra *Ham* हं of akasha tattwa, the space element, which contains the manifest universe. Feel yourself merging with it, attracted to its yantra and mantra. Retain this yantra and mantra in the centre of your awareness. Be aware of the other characteristics of space also and feel them as part of your own divine self.

To end the practice, disengage the mind from the mantra *Ham* हं and from the yantra of the space element. Be aware of the rhythm of the breath, the natural pause at the end of each inhalation, the beginning, end and rebirth of each breath. Be aware of the other elements which are part of your nature. Be aware of how you are feeling. Be aware of the surroundings. Be aware of

your physical body and how you are feeling and check that you are awake and conscious of the outside world. Be aware of the natural breath and its rhythm. Feel the energy flowing in the body with the breath. Check you are aware of the surroundings and the time of day. Gently open the eyes.

Preparation: The other dharanas should be practised first.

Breathing: Let mastery of the breath develop naturally as in the other dharanas.

Duration: Begin with short practices of five minutes or twenty minutes, however long the practice can be maintained with alert awareness and a witnessing attitude. Eventually adepts can practise this dharana for up to two hours.

Precautions: These techniques should be practised slowly with proper guidance.

Benefits: Practising this dharana helps to awaken vishuddhi chakra and, therefore, to attain a pure state. It is also beneficial for the ability to communicate. The verses state that a sadhaka opens the gates of *moksha*, liberation, with the help of akashi dharana.

Mudra

I. MAHA MUDRA (the great attitude)

Verses 29–31

पायुमूलं वामगुल्फे संपीड्य दृढयत्नतः ।
याम्यपादं प्रासार्याथ करोपात्तपदाङ्गुलिः ॥ 29 ॥
कण्ठ संकोचनं कृत्वा भ्रुवोर्मध्यं निरीक्षयेत् ।
पूरकैर्वायुं सम्पूर्य महामुद्रा निगद्यते ॥ 30 ॥
वलितं पलितं चैव जरा मृत्युं निवारयेत् ।
क्षयकासं उदावर्तप्लीहाजीर्णज्वरं तथा ।
नाशयेत्सर्वरोगांश्च महामुद्राप्रसाधनात् ॥ 31 ॥

*Paayumoolam vaamagulphe sampeedya dridayatnatah;
Yaamyapaadam praasaaryaatha karopaattapadaangulih. (29)*

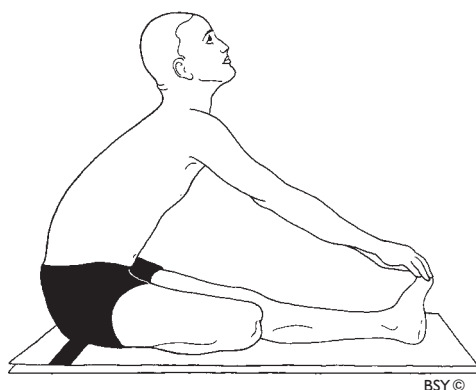
*Kantha sankochanam kritvaa bhruvormadhyam nireekashyet;
Poorakairvaayum sampooryaa mahaamudraa nigadyate. (30)*

*Valitam palitam chaiva jaraa mrityum nivaarayet;
Kshayakaasam udaavartapleehaajeernajvaram tathaa;
Naashayetsarvarogaamshcha mahaamudraaprasaadhanaat. (31)*

Press the anal region with the left heel, stretch the right leg in front, hold the toes of the right foot with both hands and keep the gaze focused at the eyebrow centre and contract the throat. It is called maha mudra. Tuberculosis, kapha disorders, constipation, enlarged

spleen, prolonged fever and other diseases are cured by this practice and the body attains health.

Maha mudra is formed from the conjunction of two Sanskrit words, maha and mudra. *Maha* means the greatest and *mudra* means a technique to create a particular attitude or mental modification. Therefore, *maha mudra* means both the technique referred to here and the actual state by which the human consciousness travels in the highest level.



Technique

Sit with both legs outstretched. Bend the left knee and press the left heel firmly into the perineum or vulva, the location point of mooladhara chakra. The right leg remains outstretched. In this position inhale deeply, then exhale and bend forward just enough to be able to clasp the right big toe with both hands. Slowly inhale, tilt the head slightly back, hold the breath inside and perform shambhavi mudra and moola bandha. This is the asana, which is the first stage of the practice. This position is held as long as antar kumbhaka, internal breath retention, can be comfortably maintained. To release, place the hands on the knees, straighten the head and exhale.

There is another part to the practice which has not been described in the sutra. Once the position is assumed, awareness is rotated around the three chakras that are most affected by the mudra. In this way, there is meditation on three psychic centres: mooladhara, vishuddhi and ajna. The consciousness is rotated between these three chakras while holding the breath in. When the breath can no longer be retained, the asana is released as follows: release the right big toe, place the hands on the knees and straighten the head which releases the constriction in the throat, release moola bandha, release shambhavi mudra and exhale.

Preparation: Before commencing maha mudra, the practitioner should be thoroughly proficient in the techniques of shambhavi mudra, moola bandha and kumbhaka, and have practised them for some time. Maha mudra as practised today usually includes khechari mudra also.

Breathing: One round is equivalent to one complete inhalation and exhalation. The longer the breath can be retained the better, but do not strain the lungs. The length of the breath should be extended gradually over a period of months and years.

Duration: Beginners may practise three rounds, once with the right leg outstretched, once with the left leg outstretched and once with both legs outstretched. This may be slowly increased to a maximum of 12 rounds, i.e. four on one side, four on the other and four with both legs outstretched.

Sequence: This practice should ideally be followed by maha bheda mudra.

Time of practice: Maha mudra is best practised in the early morning while the stomach is completely empty. It is especially recommended before meditation practices.

Contra-indications: People suffering from high blood pressure, heart complaints or glaucoma should not perform this practice. Maha mudra should not be performed without prior purification of the body.

Impurity is indicated by symptoms of accumulated toxins such as skin eruptions. The practice of maha mudra generates a lot of heat and should be avoided in hot summers. This practice should not be attempted without expert guidance.

Benefits: Physically, digestion is improved and diseases relating to the stomach are reduced. With the practice of maha mudra, disorders such as excess kapha, piles, tuberculosis, ailments of the spleen and throat, fever, etc., which are linked with the digestive process, show improvement. The sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems are balanced. Peace and tranquillity are established in the sensory and motor nerves connecting the senses, body and mind. Sensory experiences are reduced, thereby reducing excitement and calming the activity in the brain. Slowly the brainwaves become peaceful, inducing spontaneous meditation. This mudra stimulates the energy circuit linking mooladhara with ajna chakra. The whole system is charged with prana, which intensifies awareness.

From a practical point of view, maha mudra can be practised prior to meditation to reduce restlessness in chitta, making it calm and peaceful, and making the mind one-pointed. This practice brings introversion to the mind. When shambhavi mudra is performed, restlessness of the mind quickly subsides. When the eyes are closed, the mind becomes introverted. The number and speed of the thoughts and feelings are reduced. After practising for some time, the mind attains *shoonya avastha*, a vacuum state. In this one-pointed or focused state there are no thoughts or feelings. With the removal of energy blockages, mental turmoil quickly vanishes.

When moola bandha and constriction of the throat are practised, both prana vayu, which is influenced by jalandhara bandha, and apana vayu, which is influenced by moola bandha, are brought to the middle of the body at manipura chakra, where they unite and activation

of prana shakti is experienced. When prana shakti is awakened properly inside the body, then the two flows of ida and pingala come into a balanced state and sushumna is awakened.

It is said in the yoga scriptures that awakening of sushumna is necessary if one is to succeed in meditation and gain mastery over it. *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (3:14, 16) adds more information as to the benefits of the practice: “Maha mudra removes the worst afflictions (the five kleshas) and the cause of death. Therefore, it is called the ‘great attitude’ by those of the highest knowledge. For one who practises maha mudra there is nothing wholesome or unwholesome. Anything can be consumed, even the deadliest of poisons, is digested like nectar.”

2. NABHO MUDRA (sky mudra)

Verse 32

यत्र यत्र स्थितो योगी सर्वकार्येषु सर्वदा ।
उर्ध्वजिह्वः स्थिरो भूत्वा धारयेत्पवनं सदा ।
नभोमुद्रा भवेदेषा योगिनां रोगनाशिनी ॥ ३२ ॥

*Yatra yatra sthito yogee sarvakaaryeshu sarvadaa;
Urdhvajihvah sthiro bhootvaa dhaarayetpavanam sadaa;
Nabhomudraa bhavedeshaa yoginaam roganaashinee. (32)*

Wherever one is and during all activities, a yogi should keep the tongue turned upward and retain the breath. Nabho mudra destroys all the disorders of a yogi.

Nabho mudra is a simple form of khechari mudra. The mudras described in raja yoga are similar to those explained in hatha yoga. The practices of raja yoga, however, are given keeping in mind the normal physical condition of the body, whereas the practices of hatha yoga are carried out by exerting pressure on the body and by changing its physical

state. This practice is an example of a simple raja yoga style technique included by Sage Gheranda. Here, folding the tongue upward and backward so that it lies in contact with the upper palate is called *nabho mudra*, which means the sky or space mudra. The intake of air can easily be stopped when the tongue is reversed like this. It can be practised with both internal and external breath retention.

According to many hatha yoga texts, in khechari mudra the tongue is elongated and taken into the nasal cavity. In order to elongate the tongue, a few techniques are described. In Chapter 1, while describing shatkarma, Sage Gheranda gives the method for *jihva shodhana*, cleaning the tongue, by massaging and pulling the tongue with the fingers. Another technique is to sever the fraenum beneath the tongue so that the tongue elongates and can be inserted to stimulate the centres in the nasal cavity.

3. KHECHARI MUDRA (space mudra)

Verses 33–40

जिह्वाधो नाडीं संछित्य रसनां चालयेत्सदा ।
 दोहयेन्नवनीतेन लौहयन्त्रेण कर्षयेत् ॥ 33 ॥
 एवं नित्यं समभ्यासाल्लम्बिका दीर्घतां व्रजेत् ।
 यावद्गच्छेद्भ्रुवोर्मध्ये तदा सिध्यति खेचरी ॥ 34 ॥
 रसनां तालुमूले तु शनैः शनैः प्रवेशयेत् ।
 कपालकुहरे जिह्वा प्रविष्टा विपरीतगा ।
 भ्रुवोर्मध्ये गता दृष्टिर्मुद्रा भवति खेचरी ॥ 35 ॥
 न च मूर्च्छा क्षुधा तृष्णा नैवालस्यं प्रजायते ।
 न च रोगो जरा मृत्युर्देवदेहः स जायते ॥ 36 ॥
 नाग्निना दह्यते गात्रं न शोषयति मारुतः ।
 न देहं क्लेदयन्त्यापो दशेन्न भुजङ्गमः ॥ 37 ॥
 लावण्यं च भवेद्गात्रे समाधिर्जायते ध्रुवम् ।
 कपालवक्त्रसंयोगे रसना रसमाप्नुयात् ॥ 38 ॥
 नानारससमुद्भूतमानन्दं च दिने दिने ।
 आदौ च लवणं क्षारं ततस्तिक्तकषायकम् ॥ 39 ॥

नवनीतं घृतं क्षीरं दधितक्रमधूनि च ।
द्राक्षारसं च पीयूषं जायते रसनोदकम् ॥ 40 ॥

*Jihvaado naadeem samchhitya rasanaam chaalayetsadaa;
Dohayennavaneetena lauhayantrena karshayet. (33)*

*Evam nityam samabhyaasaallambikaa deerghathaam vrajat;
Yaavadgachchhedbhruvormadhye tadaa sidhyati khecharee. (34)*

*Rasanaam taalumoole tu shanaih shanaih praveshayet;
Kapaalakuhare jihvaa pravishtaa vipareetagaa;
Bhruvormadhye gataa drishtirmudraa bhavati khecharee. (35)*

*Na cha moorchchhaa kshudhaa trishnaa naivaalasyam prajaayate;
Na cha rogo jaraa mrityurdevadehah sa jaayate. (36)*

*Naagninaa dahyate gaatram na shoshayati maarutah;
Na deham kledayantyaapo dashenna bhujangamah. (37)*

*Laavanyam cha bhavedgaatre samaadhirjaayate dhruvam;
Kapaalavaktrasamyoge rasanaa rasamaapnuyaat. (38)*

*Naanaarasasamudbhootamaanandam cha dine dine;
Aadau cha lavanam kshaaram tatastiktakashaayakam. (39)*

*Navaneetam ghritam ksheeram dadhitakramadhooni cha;
Draakshaarasam cha peeyoosham jaayate rasanodakam. (40)*

The nadi connecting the tongue and the root of the tongue, which is located underneath the tongue, is to be severed and the tip of the tongue is to be moved continuously. By applying butter and with the help of dohan kriya (the milking process) it is to be pulled with iron forceps. With daily practice the tongue becomes elongated. Its length should be so increased that it can reach the eyebrow centre. Khechari mudra is then accomplished. In this way the tongue should gradually be inserted into the root of the palate. By folding the tongue upward and backward, it should be taken right up to the nasal cavity. Keep the awareness fixed at the eyebrow centre at that time. This is khechari mudra.

The practitioner of khechari mudra is not troubled by unconsciousness, hunger, thirst, laziness, etc. Fear of any disorder or disease, old age and death vanishes as the body becomes divine. The physical body is neither burnt in fire nor dried up by wind. It can neither be made wet by water nor does poison have any effect as in the case of snake bite. The body becomes graceful and charming. Unshakeable samadhi is perfected.

Various juices are produced as a result of the union between the forehead and the mouth through the tongue. Therefore, strange types of juices keep being produced, day in and day out, through the tongue of the practitioner. New blissful experiences manifest. In the beginning salty, alkaline, bitter and astringent tastes and then the taste of butter, ghee (clarified butter), milk, curd, buttermilk, honey, grapes or raisins and then nectar are produced.

For the technique in raja yoga simple methods have been prescribed, taking into consideration the physical body and the care that it needs.

It is stated clearly here that in order to perfect this practice the first requirement in hatha yoga is that the tongue should be long. In order to increase the length of the tongue, the fraenum in between the palate and the tongue is gradually severed. This hatha yoga technique of khechari mudra, in which the fraenum under the tongue is cut, is not recommended for anyone needing to live an active life in society. Cutting the fraenum makes eating a more difficult process and without a special diet the health suffers. It can also make speech very indistinct. The modern practice of khechari mudra which is recommended today refers to the raja yoga variation, described as 'nabho mudra' by Sage Gheranda.

Preparing the tongue

In the past, yogis used to say that the fraenum should be severed with the help of the root of a tree, or a sharp edged

leaf like *tejpata* (*Cinnamomum tamala*), which is put in tea and is pure, so that there is no infection. It is also sometimes severed with the help of a rice (paddy) plant. In the *Yoga Tattwopanishad* it states that each time this is practised, the severing should be equivalent only to the thickness of a hair. This means that it should be a mere touch, a slight stroke.

In modern times some people have had the tongue severed through surgery. In this process bleeding takes place, but according to the *Yoga Tattwopanishad* and other yoga scriptures oozing of blood should not take place at all while perfecting khechari. What the motive was behind this saying cannot be known exactly, but it can be inferred that it is cautionary. In those days if the region became septic, medicinal herbs might not always have been available. It would have been difficult for a person if there was no one close by with knowledge of medicinal herbs. For this reason it says that severing of the tongue should be just equal to the thickness of a hair and there should be no bleeding. It should be a process in which the fraenum is cut daily or weekly, bit by bit, only the thickness of a hair each time. This means it is just like drawing a line. The tongue is to be gradually elongated by *dohan kriya*, the milking process.

Two methods of dohan kriya are explained. One is outward massage of the tongue using a finger and the other is using forceps. The tongue is massaged in the same manner as in the milking process and it is pulled daily with a pair of forceps. There is a possibility of vomiting if the tongue is held with the fingers during dohan kriya, so forceps or a pair of tongs can be used to hold it firmly but gently.

Technique

Once the tongue has been sufficiently elongated and pranayama has been perfected, the tongue is folded back on itself and moved upwards into the nasal cavity. Here it can effectively control the flow of breath and energy in the left and right nostrils, directly influencing ida and pingala nadis and stimulating various centres within the

skull directly. The instructions of the guru should be followed carefully at each step.

Breathing: It is essential to perfect pranayama prior to the practice of khechari, because when the tongue goes upward, the nasal cavities can be closed and breathing is not so easy. In some of the yoga scriptures it is said that mastery of pranayama does not mean retaining the breath inside or outside. Not everyone can attain the capacity to retain the breath for hours at a time. Perhaps even yogis do not achieve this capacity, but a state very similar to it is attained. If there are normally 10–15 breaths per minute, then in the state of perfection the breathing is reduced by half, which means only five to seven breaths per minute. Thus the speed and rate of breathing are reduced for hours at a time. This is what is meant by retention of the breath. The aim of yogis is to reduce the breathing rate gradually, so that there is only one breath in and out in a minute. In this state there should be no compromise in the normal functioning of the body, no feeling of breathlessness and no lack of oxygen.

Therefore, for khechari it is essential to have control over the breath and to prepare the tongue. Finally, it should be realized that khechari should not be practised without the guidance and directions of the guru. This is the main rule of yoga.

Precautions: In yogic texts it is also clearly instructed that khechari mudra should not be brought into use until the tongue becomes long and thin. When the tongue is inserted upward and backward, a taste is experienced; juices are secreted from the taste glands (buds) located on the palate and *kapala kuhar*, hole in the forehead. At first the mouth may be filled with an extremely bitter taste. Next comes an astringent taste, then salty and after that it is filled with a sweet taste. That means all types of tastes are experienced while doing this practice. When the tongue crosses the limits of the taste glands,

various tastes are secreted which cannot be described. For instance, the taste of milk or butter, which is neither sweet, nor alkaline, nor salty, nor bitter, nor even sour, cannot be described. So the experience of these other tastes, which can be called natural flavours, occur as the glands become very active. The secretion of saliva in the mouth is also reduced while practising khechari so that saliva does not constantly need to be swallowed.

There is also a warning that khechari should not be practised by anyone who experiences a bitter taste in the mouth. If a bitter taste is produced and one keeps on practising khechari without paying any heed, that bitterness can become a poison for the body. If the bitter taste persists, it also means that all the toxins and disorders of the body are not yet fully removed. If this happens, it is imperative to practise the hatha yoga shatkarmas all over again.

It is important to make the body completely free from all disorders. The indication of being free from disorders is absence of bitterness in the mouth. On rising in the morning, there is often a persistent bitter taste in the mouth, which means that the digestive system is unhealthy. It has been observed that when the bowels are clear, the bitter taste automatically vanishes.

Cease the practice for at least one month if an extreme bitter taste is experienced. Take care with the diet and lifestyle, then try again.

Contra-indications: Do not practise cutting the fraenum under the tongue if clear communication through speech is required. It is very difficult to pronounce words clearly after this procedure. Do not cut the fraenum under the tongue if eating foods that require chewing is desired. Tongue ulcers and other common mouth ailments will temporarily preclude performance of this practice.

Benefits: Khechari mudra stimulates a number of pressure points located in the back of the mouth and the nasal cavity. These points influence the whole body. A number

of glands are also massaged, stimulating the secretion of certain hormones and saliva. This practice reduces the sensations of hunger and thirst, and induces a state of inner calm and stillness. These effects are shown by those yogis who practise underground samadhi. During that time they maintain khechari mudra so that they do not feel hunger and thirst. Even in normal life, with continuous practice of the simple version of khechari called nabho mudra, the sensations of hunger and thirst are reduced. One does not feel like eating or drinking and gradually the body adjusts accordingly. This is a fact which can be experienced by experimentation.

It is also said that the full practice of khechari can separate the *karana sharira*, the causal body, from the *sthoola sharira*, the gross body, and enable the entry of *chetana*, consciousness, in the *karana sharira*. In the ancient yoga scriptures, great importance has been accorded to this mudra. According to Sage Gheranda, the body of a person who has perfected khechari is not influenced by fire, water or air, because of the secretion of nectar from bindu visarga. When this nectar or elixir of life is taken into the body in a proper way, it cannot be influenced by old age, death or any kind of harm, and it becomes as hard as a *vajra*, thunderbolt, and unchanging.

In *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (3:40–48), the same hatha yoga technique is described with a little more information as to the benefits:

One who knows khechari mudra is unafflicted by disease and unaffected by the laws of karma and the bonds of time. The mind moves in *Khe*, Brahman, because the tongue moves in *khe*, space, Therefore, the perfected ones have called this mudra *khechari*, moving in space or Brahman.

When the upper cavity of the palate is sealed by khechari mudra, the bindu or semen cannot be lost even if

one embraces a beautiful woman. Even when there is movement of the bindu and it enters the genitals, it is seized by closing the perineum and taken upward. With the tongue directed upwards the knower of yoga drinks the fluid of the moon. Within fifteen days physical death is conquered. The yogi's body is forever full of the moon's nectar. Even if one is bitten by Takshaka, the king of snakes, one is not poisoned.

Just as fuel kindles fire and oil a lamp, so the indweller of the body does not vacate while the body is full of the moon's nectar. By constant swallowing of the tongue one can drink amaravaruni. I consider such a one of high lineage, others destroy the heritage. The word *go* means tongue (and also cow). When it enters the upper palate, it is called 'eating the flesh of the cow'. It (khechhari) destroys the great sins.

Immortality is usually understood as indestructibility. In the yogic scriptures immortality means something else. Immortality here means that whatever one's age, fifty, eighty or a hundred years, the body does not age, its capacity is not reduced and the mental energy is not impaired in any way.

4. MAHA BHEDA MUDRA (great piercing attitude)

Verses 41-44

रूपयौवनलावण्यं नारीणां पुरुषं बिना ।
मूलबन्धमहाबन्धौ महबेधं विना तथा ॥41॥
महाबन्धंसमासाद्य कुम्भकं चरेदुड्डीन ।
महाबेधः समाख्यातो योगिनां सिद्धिदायकः ॥42॥
महाबन्धमूलबन्धौ महाबेधसमन्वितौ ।
प्रत्यहं कुरुते यस्तु स योगी योगवित्तमः ॥43॥
न मृत्युतो भयं तस्य न जरा तस्य विद्यते ।
गोपनीयः प्रयत्नेन वेधोऽयं योगिपुंगवैः ॥44॥

*Roopayauvanalaavanyam naareenaam purusham binaa;
Moolabandhamahaabandhau mahabedham vinaa tathaa. (41)*

*Mahaabandhamsamaasaadya kumbhakam chareduddeena;
Mahaabedhah samaakhyatao yoginaam siddhidaayakah. (42)*

*Mahaabandhamoolabandhau mahaabedhasamanvitaau;
Pratyaham kurute yastu sa yogee yogavittamah. (43)*

*Na mrityuto bhayam tasya na jaraa tasya vidyate;
Gopaneeyah prayatnena vedho'yam yogipungavaih. (44)*

In the same way that the beauty, youth and elegance of a woman are useless without a man, similarly moola bandha and maha bandha are also fruitless without maha bedha. First practise maha bandha then, while performing uddiyana bandha, retain the air through kumbhaka. This has been called maha bedha. The yogis who perform maha bandha and moola bandha along with maha bedha daily are considered the best of all yogis. They are neither affected by old age nor the fear of death. The best of the yogis should keep it secret.

Bheda or *bedha* means 'to pierce'. Just as the beads of a *mala*, rosary, are pierced with a needle in order to thread them, in exactly the same manner the seven chakras are pierced

by this practice. Sage Gheranda and Swatmarama have described it under hatha yoga, but one version of maha mudra is also a practice of kriya yoga.

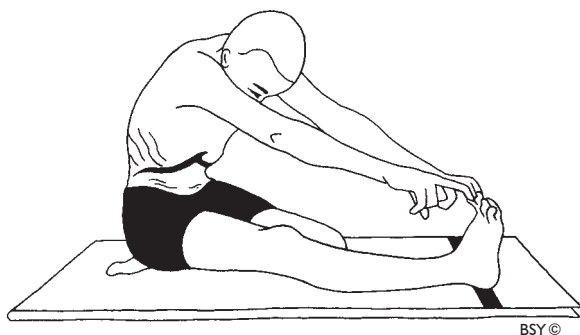
The chakras are pierced in these practices. This piercing is through consciousness. In each chakra there is a state of prana and also a state of consciousness which is as yet unknown to the practitioner. In every chakra there is a state of consciousness which in common language is called an expanded form of consciousness. In mooladhara, the form of consciousness reflects the qualities of mooladhara; in swadhisthana, the consciousness takes a swadhisthana form; in manipura, anahata, vishuddhi and ajna, the form of consciousness relates to each particular chakra. Thus one moves through the sequential development of consciousness, experiencing new forms of consciousness at each progression. The idea is to traverse each state while maintaining one's present awareness and state of perception.

The most important principle of kundalini yoga is that while crossing all the chakras or psychic centres, the awareness, the consciousness and the state of perception should remain the same. This state of perception is one-pointed, the end of being scattered. It can be called an 'unscattered mind', where there is no dissipation or deflection. It is a fully focused and one-pointed state, in which the mind is not influenced by any quality. This is the basic form of consciousness. All the chakras or psychic centres should be pierced by this one-pointed state.

Technique

The technique is similar to maha mudra. One leg is outstretched in front of the body while the other is kept close to mooladhara and the perineum. First of all inhale deeply, then exhale. While leaning forward, the toes of the outstretched foot are clasped with both hands. This is the basic position for both maha bandha and maha bheda mudra.

Mentally repeat 'mooladhara, mooladhara, mooladhara' with the awareness at mooladhara. During external



retention, practise *maha bandha*, the great lock, which means the three locks: jalandhara bandha, uddiyana bandha and moola bandha, are applied. The gaze is focused on the nosetip.

After this the awareness is rotated through the three chakras where the locks are applied. In moola bandha energy is locked into mooladhara, through uddiyana bandha be aware of manipura and in jalandhara bandha be aware of vishuddhi. The awareness should rest on each chakra region for up to three seconds. External breath retention is held for as long as possible without straining while the awareness is rotated. When external breath retention is no longer possible, moola bandha is released first, followed by uddiyana bandha and finally jalandhara bandha. After releasing all three bandhas, straighten the body, release the toes and replace the hands on the knees. This makes one round of maha bheda.

Then breathe in and begin the next round. Begin by practising three times with the left leg folded, then three times with the right leg folded, then three times with both legs outstretched.

Duration: As for maha mudra. Do not strain the lungs. Increase the lung capacity gradually over a period of months and years of regular practice.

Time of practice: Maha bheda mudra is best practised in the early morning while the stomach is completely empty, and is especially recommended before meditation.

Contra-indications: As for moola, uddiyana and jalandhara bandhas. This practice should not be undertaken without proper guidance.

Benefits: The benefits are similar to maha mudra. This mudra has a profound influence at a pranic level. It specifically influences mooladhara, manipura and vishuddhi chakras, manipulating and harnessing the energies within them to induce concentration of mind and meditation. Maha bheda supplements and follows maha mudra; together they supercharge the whole body-mind complex which enables a very powerful flow at the physical, mental and pranic levels. There is circulation of fresh energy in the body, mind and senses. Consciousness becomes extremely subtle and deep.

One of the main benefits of this mudra is to achieve a high state of consciousness while maintaining awareness of consciousness in a normal form. This is the aim and purpose of maha bheda mudra. Maha bheda enables yogis to become *siddhas*, perfect and knowledgeable. A person who does all three practices of maha bandha, moola bandha and maha bheda daily is known as a *yogavit*, or yoga specialist.

5. VIPAREETA KARANI MUDRA (inverted psychic attitude)

Verses 45–48

नाभिमूले वसेत्सूर्यस्तालुमूले च चन्द्रमाः ।
अमृतं ग्रस्ते सूर्यस्ततो मृत्युवशो नरः ॥45॥
उर्ध्वं च योजयेत्सूर्यं चन्द्रं चाप्यध आनयेत् ।
विपरीतकरी मुद्रा सर्वतन्त्रेषु गोपिता ॥46॥
भूमौ शिरश्च संस्थाप्य करयुग्मं समाहितः ।
उर्ध्वपादः स्थिरो भूत्वा विपरीतकरी मता ॥47॥
मुद्रां च साधयेन्नित्यं जरां मृत्युं च नाशयेत् ।
स सिद्धः सर्वलोकेषु प्रलयेऽपि न सीदति ॥48॥

*Naabhimoole vasetsooryastaalumoole cha chandramaah;
Amritam graste sooryastato mrityuvasho narah. (45)*

*Urdhvam cha yojayetsooryam chandram chaapyadha aanayet;
Vipareetakaree mudraa sarvatantreshu gopitaa. (46)*

*Bhoomau shirashcha samsthaapya karayugmam samaahitah;
Urdhvapaadah sthiro bhootvaa vipareetakaree mataa. (47)*

*Mudraam cha saadhayennityam jaraam mrityum cha naashayet;
Sa siddhah sarvalokeshu pralaye'pi na seedati. (48)*

The sun plexus is located at the root of the navel and the moon plexus is located at the root of the palate. A person dies when the sun consumes nectar secreted by the moon, but when the chandra nadi consumes the nectar, there is no fear of death. Therefore, the sun is to be brought up and the moon is to be brought down. This is vipareeta karani mudra, which is secret by all standards. Place the head on the ground, provide support with both hands and raise both legs; this is vipareeta karani mudra. By practising it daily, old age and death are eliminated. The practitioner of this mudra attains siddhi (perfection) in all the lokas (worlds) and is not grieved even at the time of dissolution (of the universe).

Here there are two words, vipareeta and karani. *Vipareeta* means inverted and *karani* means 'one who does'. How did this mudra get its name? *Vipareeta karani* means bringing the body from its normal state to the opposite or reverse state. Throughout life a human being stands upright on the feet, but in vipareeta karani mudra the normal state of the body is reversed.

Now another question arises: why is it called a mudra rather than an asana? Sarvangasana is also practised to invert the body. When sarvangasana has been described under the category of yogasanas, why has vipareeta karani, which is similar and seems to be just a simple form of sarvangasana, been presented as a mudra? To understand this, the differences in the practices of sarvangasana and vipareeta karani need to be looked at.

Sarvangasana versus vipareeta karani

The position in vipareeta karani seems similar to that of sarvangasana. There is only a slight change in the position of the spinal column. The trunk is raised from the ground making an angle of 45 degrees, and the buttocks are supported by the hands, whereas in sarvangasana the trunk is kept perpendicular to the ground to make an angle of 90 degrees. In the practice of sarvangasana, jalandhara bandha is automatically practised, because the chin presses against the chest, but while practising vipareeta karani there is no jalandhara bandha. The pressure which is exerted on the chest in sarvangasana is absent in vipareeta karani.

Also, in the practice of sarvangasana the load and pressure is exerted on the neck and shoulders, in vipareeta karani it is distributed onto the arms and hands, i.e. the weight of the body is distributed from the elbows right up to the region of the head. The feeling of the weight of the body pressing down, especially on the neck, which is experienced during sarvangasana, is not present in vipareeta karani mudra. Vipareeta karani mudra gives a gentle inversion without hard compression of the neck as in sarvangasana.

Physiologically, there is a greater flow of blood to the cerebral capillaries and blood vessels which helps to activate the brain. Therefore, it is believed that the posture gives a fresh charge to the brain.

During the practice of sarvangasana, the whole neck is compressed and contracted. Breathing continues in a normal way, although with slight difficulty due to the compression of the throat. In vipareeta karani the throat is not contracted. This is an important difference as it means that the flow of both blood and prana to the brain is not restricted. However, it is the flow of prana which has the greatest relevance to the quality of the practice as a mudra.

Solar and lunar energy

In the practice of vipareeta karani mudra particular attention is paid to two chakras: manipura and vishuddhi. The third point to which the awareness is taken is bindu visarga. The practice of vipareeta karani, including concentration on these chakras, is the first practice of kriya yoga.

It is also helpful to understand vipareeta karani from the viewpoint of hatha yoga. In hatha yoga vipareeta karani mudra is explained in the context of the sun and moon, it is said that the moon is above and the sun below. The centre of *surya*, the sun, is manipura chakra in the solar plexus, and the centre of *chandra*, the moon, is the region of the brain or ajna, lalana and bindu chakras. Visualization of the moon can be done at both ajna and bindu chakras, but in ajna the sun and moon are both visualized, whereas in bindu only the moon is visualized. These verses say about the moon: *taalumoole cha chandramaah*, the moon resides behind the palate, i.e. where lalana and bindu chakras are located. The sutras also say, *Amritam graste sooryastato mrityuvasho narah*, the sun digests the nectar, due to which man is in the grip of death.

In vipareeta karani mudra the positions of the sun (manipura chakra) and the moon (bindu visarga) are reversed, so that the sun is above the moon because the navel region goes up and the head is down on the ground.

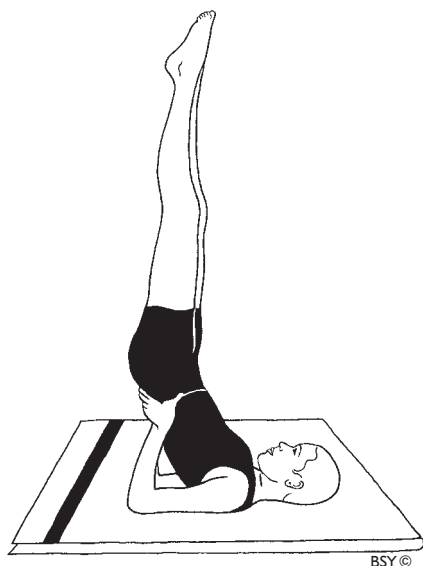
Normally, the life-giving nectar flows downward from bindu to manipura, where it is burnt up by physical activities. In vipareeta karani, however, the process is reversed. The nectar of subtle life force is redirected from manipura back to bindu, its source, which leads to the expansion of consciousness and revitalization of one's entire being. It is even said that the aged can regain their youth and vitality by this practice.

In *Gheranda Samhita*, the asana or position of the body is described but which technique or method to follow while in the posture is not mentioned at all. This is because this sadhana or scripture is extremely secret, *sarva tantreshu gopitaa*. In this practice an effort is made to change the activities or processes of the body and the chemicals produced inside the body. Even if this is achieved by everyone who practises it, there will be those who do not understand what is happening to them. For this reason, it has been described as a secret process.

In vipareeta karani mudra, first the inverted posture reverses the flow of prana. Then continually rotating awareness and breath between the chakras takes this practice from being just an asana to being a mudra where one increases the awareness of, and redirects prana. When it is used as a mudra, the pranic dimension is augmented. With the rotation of awareness, the concentration and mental faculties are directed to a particular pathway in one's being. As one's awareness evolves, one can feel the actual movement happening at various levels.

Technique

Lie flat on the back with the legs and feet together in a straight line. Both knees are kept together. Place the hands and arms close to the body with the palms facing down. Relax the whole body. Breathe in deeply and slowly raise both legs, keeping them straight and together. Slowly move the feet over the body towards the head. Push down on the arms and hands, raising the buttocks. Roll the spine from the floor, taking the



legs further over the head. Turn the palms up, bend the elbows and let the top of the hips rest on the base of the palms near the wrist. Keep the elbows as close to each other as is comfortable.

Supporting the hips with both hands, first raise both legs in such a way that they are perpendicular to the ground (vertical position). Then, keeping the legs straight and together, tilt them slightly over the head so that the eyes look straight up at the feet. Bear in mind that the chin does not press against the chest. Close the eyes and relax the whole body. Fix the awareness at manipura chakra in the spine, directly behind the navel. This is the starting position.

At first the pressure on the wrists and elbows may be painful and make it difficult to retain the position for very long. With regular practice, however, the arms will strengthen and this problem will cease. In the inverted position the entire body is supported by the palms of the hands forming a cup around the hips on which the upper portion of the buttocks rest.

In order to release the posture, bring the legs towards the head and then place the arms down beside the body with the palms facing downwards. Lower the spine slowly onto the ground, then bring the legs down, preferably keeping them straight if this does not strain the back. The breath is then held inside while returning the body to the ground. Relax the whole body in shavasana.

Breathing: In this technique, awareness of the breath directed in a particular process is an essential part of the mudra. The breathing process is as follows: while inhaling move the awareness from manipura to vishuddhi, while exhaling move the awareness from vishuddhi to bindu.

Hatha yogis also combine the practices of khechari mudra and ujjayi pranayama with this practice. With ujjayi the breath is taken up from vishuddhi to bindu in a sudden rush, or ejection. Imagine that the awareness is flowing from vishuddhi to bindu just as a jet of liquid flows out from an injection. This is one round

Again, take the awareness to manipura before inhaling for a second round.

Duration: Practise five to seven rounds. If pressure builds up in the head, end the practice. Gradually increase the number of rounds up to 21 over a period of months. The length of inhalation and exhalation will increase spontaneously over time as the practice becomes more comfortable.

Sequence: At the end of the daily practice programme and before meditation. Do not perform after vigorous exercise or for at least three hours after meals. Upon completion of the practice, it is advisable to do a backward bending asana such as matsyasana, bhujangasana or ushtasana.

Time of practice: Vipareeta karani mudra should be practised at the same time each day, preferably in the early morning.

Contra-indications: This is an inverted practice and should not be performed unless the body is healthy. People suffering from high blood pressure, heart disease,

enlarged liver or spleen, enlarged thyroid or excessive toxins in the body should not perform this practice. It should not be attempted by anyone suffering from cervical spondylitis, slipped disc, thrombosis, impure blood or weak blood vessels in the eyes. It is not recommended during pregnancy or during the monthly menstruation period.

Benefits: It balances a hypoactive thyroid and acts as a preventive for coughs, colds, sore throat and bronchial disorders. It stimulates the appetite and digestion, so a healthy and plentiful diet should be taken. It helps relieve constipation, particularly if water is drunk just before the practice. Regular practice prevents atherosclerosis by restoring vascular tone and elasticity. It relieves prolapse, haemorrhoids, varicose veins and hernia, all of which are exacerbated by the downward pull of gravity. Circulation to the brain is enhanced, especially to the cerebral cortex and pituitary and pineal glands. Cerebral insufficiency and senile dementia are counteracted and mental alertness increased.

The inverted posture sustained in this mudra is used to reverse the downward and outward movement of energy and redirect it back to the brain. When this happens, the whole being is revitalized and awareness expands. As the practice is perfected, the flow of prana in ida and pingala nadis becomes balanced. This state manifests as an equal flow of breath in the nostrils. The balancing effect of the practice also helps prevent disease from manifesting on the physical and mental planes.

Sage Gheranda says that whoever practises the sadhana of this mudra daily attains victory over old age and death, achieves siddhi in all the *lokas* or dimensions and is not destroyed even at the time of dissolution.

Practice note: The metabolic rate may increase when this mudra is practised for periods of half an hour or more. If this happens, the food intake should be adjusted accordingly.

Variation: There is another version of vipareeta karani which is taught as an asana for the considerable physical benefits of the inverted posture. In this method the legs are kept straight and perpendicular to the floor. The feet are not brought in line with the line of sight. It is a much simpler technique. One simply breathes normally in the final position. This practice is known as vipareeta karani asana, but it is not exactly the correct position for the mudra.

6. YONI MUDRA (attitude of the source)

Verses 49–56

सिद्धासनं समासाद्य कर्णचक्षुर्नसामुखम् ।
 अङ्गुष्ठतर्जनी मध्यानामाद्यैः पिदधीत वै ॥ 49 ॥
 प्राणमाकृष्य काकीभिरपाने योजयेत्ततः ।
 षट् चक्राणि क्रमाद्ध्यात्वा हुं हंसमनुना सुधीः ॥ 50 ॥
 चैतन्यमानयेद्देवीं निद्रिता या भुजङ्गिनी ।
 जीवेन सहितां शक्तिं समुत्थाप्य पराम्बुजे ॥ 51 ॥
 शक्तिमयो स्वयं भूत्वा परं शिवेन संगमम् ।
 नानासुखं विहारं च चिन्तयेत्परमं सुखम् ॥ 52 ॥
 शिवशक्तिसमायोगादेकान्तं भुविभावयेत् ।
 आनन्दमानसो भूत्वा अहं ब्रह्मेति संभवेत् ॥ 53 ॥
 ब्रह्महाभ्रूणहा चैव सुरापो गुरु तल्पगः ।
 एतैः पापैर्न लिप्यते योनि मुद्रा निबन्धनात् ॥ 54 ॥
 योनिमुद्रा परागोप्या देवानामपि दुर्लभा ।
 सकृत्तु लब्धसंसिद्धिः समाधिस्थः स एव हि ॥ 55 ॥
 यानि पापानि घोराणि उपपापानि यानि च ।
 तानि सर्वाणि नश्यन्ति योनिमुद्रा निबन्धनात् ।
 तस्मादभ्यासनं कुर्याद्यादि मुक्तिं समिच्छति ॥ 56 ॥

*Siddhaasanam samaasaadya karnachakshurnasaamukham;
 Angushtathatarjane madhyaanaamaadyaih pidadheeta vai. (49)*

Praanamaakrishya kaakeebhirapaane yojayettatah;

*Shat chakraani kramaaddhyaatvaa hum hamsamanunaa
sudheeh.* (50)

*Chaitanyamaanayeddeveem nidritaa yaa bhujanginee;
Jeevena sahitaam shaktim samutthaapya paraambuje.* (51)

*Shaktimayo svayam bhootvaa param shivena sangamam;
Naanaasukham vihaaram cha chintayetparamam sukham.* (52)

*Shivashaktisamaayogaadekaantam bhuvibhaavayet;
Aanandamaanaso bhootvaa aham brahmeti sambhavet.* (53)

*Brahmahaabhroonahaa chaiva suraapo guru talpagah;
Etaih paapairna lipyate yoni mudraa nibandhanaat.* (54)

*Yonimudraa paraagopyaa devaanaamapi durlabhaa;
Sakrittu labdhasamsiddhih samaadhisthah sa eva hi.* (55)

*Yaani paapaani ghoraani upapaapaani yaani cha;
Taani sarvaani nashyanti yonimudraa nibandhanaat;
Tasmaadabhyasaanam kuryaadyaadi muktim samichchhati.* (56)

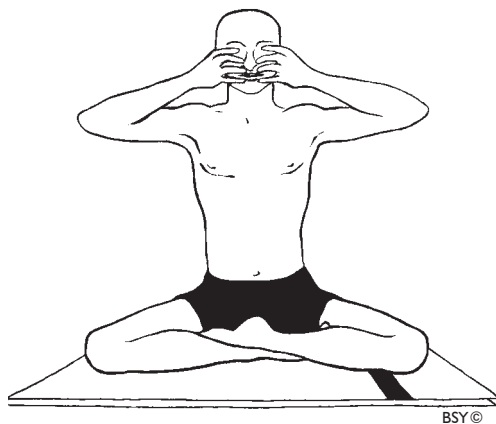
Sit in siddhasana and close the ears with both thumbs, both eyes with the index fingers, both nostrils with the middle fingers and the mouth with the ring fingers and little fingers. With the help of kaki mudra, pull the prana and join it with apana, and keeping the awareness at the six chakras in the body, awaken kundalini shakti with the mantras *Hoom* and *Hamsa* and bring the jivatma (individual soul) along with it to sahasrara. There should be the silent feeling at that time that 'I am moving comfortably along with Shiva and enriched by Shakti. With the union of Shiva and Shakti I have become blissful Brahman too.' This is yoni mudra. By means of this mudra one becomes liberated from sins like killing a brahmin or a foetus, drinking alcohol or polluting the bed of the teacher.

Yoni mudra is a top secret kriya. It is not easily accessible even to the gods. Those who achieve mastery over it by regular practice attain samadhi. All the major

sins, minor sins, etc. of the universe are erased by yoni mudra. Thus it should be practised by people seeking salvation.

The practice of yoni mudra which has been described is very vast. It is not known why it came to be known as yoni mudra because this point has not been clarified in any yogic text. One can say that it came to be known as yoni mudra because the kind of awareness or consciousness which a human being has in the womb, that basic form of consciousness that exists, is the same experience of consciousness that occurs in this practice.

In fact, this is not just a hatha yoga mudra; it is a practice of nada yoga, its other name being shanmukhi mudra.



Technique

Sage Gheranda has instructed, *Siddhasanam samaasaadya karna chakshurna saamukham, Angushtha tarjanee madhyanaamaadyaih pidadheeta vai*. Sitting in siddhasana, close the ears with the thumbs, the eyes with the index fingers, the nose with the middle fingers and the mouth by keeping the ring fingers above and the little fingers below the lips. This is in fact the practice of shanmukhi mudra, because *shanmukhi* means a particular state of six organs: two ears, two eyes, mouth and nose.

Sitting in siddhasana, practise shanmukhi mudra, but before closing the mouth with the fingers, the prana vayu is sucked inside by means of kaki mudra. *Kaki* means crow. Purse the lips into a form like the beak of a crow and inhale through this beak.

Next, unite the breath with apana vayu, which is in the lower abdominal region, below the navel. To raise apana vayu, fill the abdomen and practise moola bandha, so that the normal flow of apana vayu, which is downward, is directed in the opposite direction. Then close the lips, and slowly exhale through the nose.

Once this basic practice is comfortable, add breath retention and chakra rotation with the ajapa japa mantra *Soham* as follows. Hold the breath inside, uniting prana and apana vayus, and rotate the awareness through the chakras with the mantra *So*.

The consciousness travels from mooladhara to swadhisthana, then manipura, anahata, vishuddhi and finally ajna. The breath is held inside for six *gari* or six seconds, with moola bandha applied and the consciousness touching each psychic centre. When the consciousness reaches ajna chakra, close the mouth and exhale through the nose, with the mantra *Ham*. The reverse mantra, *Hamso*, can also be used.

Sequence: The next mudra described by Sage Gheranda is shakti chalini, and he advises that shakti chalini mudra be practised first, and then yoni mudra.

Contra-indications: This technique should not be practised if there is depression or too much introversion. Yoni mudra, and even shanmukhi mudra, are not mental therapies but skilful means to use and transcend the healthy balanced state of mind achieved through extended sadhana.

Benefits: Physically, the energy and heat from the hands and fingers stimulate and relax the nerves and muscles of the face. This practice helps in the treatment of eye, nose and throat infections and alleviates vertigo. Mentally, it balances internal and external awareness.

Yaani paapaani ghoraani upa paapaani yaani cha, taani sarvaani nashyanti yonimudraa nibandhanaat means that both the gravest of sins, *paapaani ghoraani*, and the minor sins, *upa paapaani*, are nullified or destroyed by yoni mudra.

Kundalini rising

Chaitanyamaanayeddeveem nidritaa yaa bhujanginee, thus Tripura Bhairavee who lies dormant inside us in the form of *bhujanginee*, or kundalini, is brought to consciousness or awakened. *Jeevena sahitaam shaktim samutthaapya paraambuje*, and with *jeeva bhaava*, with the feeling of 'I', the soul or *atma tattva* is taken upward, and it can be said the kundalini begins to rise.

Shaktimayo svayam bhootvaa param shivena sangamam, considering oneself to be *Shakti*, energy, one is to be united with *Shiva*, consciousness. Jiva and shakti are both to be established at sahasrara. *Naanaasukham vihaaram cha chintayetparamam sukham*, one has to meditate on this eternal blissful state. One has to meditate on the extremely blissful state while experiencing all types of pleasures.

Despite being a practice of nada yoga, yoni mudra is described here because, through its practice, an effort is made to awaken kundalini shakti by rotating the awareness around the six psychic centres with the additional help of breath retention and mantra awareness. Consciousness of the *jiva*, the individual self, is awakened with the mantra *Soham* made up of the syllables *sah* and *aham*, meaning 'That I am'. While meditating on this mantra when Shakti is united with Shiva, the experience of awakening takes place in different states of consciousness.

These different states of consciousness are represented by the six chakras. In mooladhara chakra there is one state of consciousness. There is awareness, concentration and meditation on one element. In swadhisthana there is concentration and meditation on another element. In manipura it is on a third element, and in this way finally, in

the sixth chakra, union of the entire mind takes place with superconsciousness, Shiva. The purpose or aim of this mudra is to establish both Shiva and Shakti in the consciousness.

Naanaasukham vihaaram cha chintayet paramam sukham, in this mantra *chintayet* means meditate. It may seem odd that one has to meditate on the state of supreme bliss, *paramam sukham*, while making use of all types of pleasures. How is it possible? The achievement of all types of pleasures mentioned here is in fact the awakening of consciousness and prana in each chakra. To achieve and to absorb oneself in that experience which is hidden in the dimension of consciousness and prana in each chakra is the real spiritual pleasure. The reference to 'all pleasures' does not mean physical pleasures; it means the state of oneness which manifests, the experience of new dimensions of consciousness that takes place and the pleasure and bliss that is achieved from this state.

I am That

Shiva-shaktisamaa-yogaad-ekaantam bhuvibhaavayet, Aananda-maanaso bhootvaa aham brahmeti sambhavet, one has to meditate on the blissful silent union of Shiva and Shakti and also on the concept 'I am Brahman'. Here the word *ekanta* has been used, which means peace and stability. Where consciousness is awakened, there is no movement, distraction or noise of any kind; inner peace, inner concentration and an experience of total absorption takes place. The same state has been explained here as *ekanta yoga*. When the experience of all types of dualities end internally, in the state of meditation, the experience of *ekanta* takes place and one becomes established in one's own form or nature. In this *ekanta*, one has to meditate on the union of Shiva and Shakti at sahasrara chakra. In this state, one is not even the witness or *drashta* of the union. There is no thought or idea that I am a sadhaka, sitting and imagining that the union of Shiva and Shakti is taking place at sahasrara. Rather, one is absorbed fully in the experience of it. This is the highest state of meditation.

How can one become absorbed in that *mahavakya*, great saying or teaching, *Aham Brahmasmi*, 'I am Brahman'? It is not looking at the two; because if I observe two, it means I am separate and that is separate. In the practice of yoni mudra the awakening of the feeling of *Soham*, 'That I am' is emphasized right from the start. When I am That, then I am not different from it. Thus one can attain the supreme state of consciousness.

Yonimudraa paraa-gopyaa devaanaam-api durlabhaa, Sakrittu labdha-samsiddhih samaadhisthah sa eva hi, the practice of yoni mudra is *paraa-gopyaa*, top secret. Even for the gods it is *durlabha*, hard to attain, but those who practise regularly can attain *samaadhisthah*, the state of samadhi. This is actually a description of one of the states of samadhi.

Samadhi in daily life

Two viewpoints now become apparent. If yoni mudra is practised in normal surroundings, what will the experience be? The first experience will be a pratyahara state, as the consciousness loses contact with the senses. If just shanmukhi mudra is practised, the senses, which influence the mind and brain every moment by keeping them externalized, become peaceful. The external influences cease and the state of pratyahara is achieved.

In the state of pratyahara, the mind is internalized, consciousness is internalized and the inner senses awaken. Then, in yoni mudra, a mantra is practised along with kumbhaka. In this state of pratyahara, sensations are felt in the pranamaya body or dimension. In the region of prana, awakening is experienced. A little difficulty may be felt during inhalation and exhalation because the body is not getting the usual amount of oxygen and carbon dioxide is accumulating. In this way the nervous system is activated. A state of drowsiness or a sort of sleepy state dawns and gradually the external consciousness starts vanishing.

Yogis purposely create this state through kumbhaka so that the external senses do not cause any distraction to

the one-pointedness of consciousness. When the state of drowsiness arises inside consciousness, and the mind starts becoming internalized, then if the awareness is increased, one enters the state of meditation. When there is mental chanting of the mantra, the mental recitation takes one from gross to subtle *nada*, or sound or vibration. Hearing or not hearing nada is dependent on how deep the one-pointedness is. When consciousness is engaged in a vibration, sound or mantra in this kind of practice, eventually it is not just listening to external sounds through the ears, the vibration produced inside can be listened to. This sound is actually always there, but it cannot be heard with the ears.

Samadhi through yoni mudra

Tasmaadabhyasanam kuryaadyadi muktim samichchhati, by its practice even liberation can be attained. People who are desirous of attaining *mukti*, liberation, should practise yoni mudra. Here yoni mudra is mentioned in the context of attaining the state of samadhi due to *nadanubhooti*, the experience of nada in meditation. In the final chapter of *Gheranda Samhita*, Sage Gheranda describes various types of samadhis. One of these is nada samadhi. In that chapter he once again mentions yoni mudra as a means to attain samadhi through nada anubhooti, the experience of the subtle nada.

7. VAJRONI MUDRA (thunderbolt attitude)

Verses 57–60

धरामवष्टभ्य करयोस्तलाभ्यां उर्ध्वे क्षिपेत्पाद युगंशिरस्त्रे ।
शक्ति प्रबोधाय चिरजीवनाय वज्रोणिमुद्रां मुनयोः वदन्ति ॥ 57 ॥
अयं योगे योग श्रेष्ठो योगिनां मुक्तिकारणम् ।
अयं हितप्रदो योगो योगिनां सिद्धिदायकः ॥ 58 ॥
एतद्योगप्रसादेन बिन्दुसिद्धिर्भवेद्ध्रुवम् ।
सिद्धे विन्दौ महायत्ने किं न सिध्यति भूतले ॥ 59 ॥
भोगेन महता युक्तो यदि मुद्रां समाचरेत् ।
तथापि सकला सिद्धिर्भवति तस्य निश्चितम् ॥ 60 ॥

*Dharaamavashstabhya karayostalaabhyaam urdhvam kshipetpaada
yugamshirakhe;
Shakti prabodhaaya chirajeevanaaya vajronimudraam munayoh
vadanti. (57)*

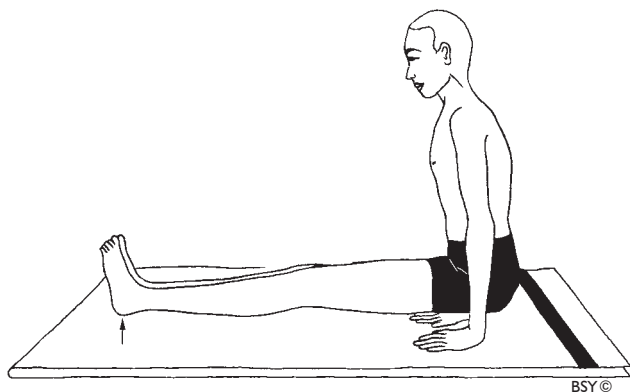
*Ayam yoge yoga shreshtho yoginaam muktikaaranam;
Ayam hitaprado yogo yoginaam siddhidaayakah. (58)*

*Etadyogaprasaadena bindusiddhirbhaveddhruvam;
Siddhe bindau mahaayatne kim na sidhyati bhootale. (59)*

*Bhogen mahataa yukto yadi mudraam samaacharet;
Tathaapi sakalaa siddhirbhavati tasya nishchitam. (60)*

Place both hands firmly on the ground and lift both the feet and the head into the sky. Learned ones have named it vajroni mudra, which facilitates the flow of energy and provides one with life. This mudra is the best, it provides mukti (liberation) and siddhi (perfection) to yogis, and is favourable. A sadhaka becomes competent in urdhvaretas tattwa due to the blessing of bindu siddhi, and once bindu siddhi is achieved, what work cannot be accomplished on this earth? Even pursuers of enjoyments can certainly achieve all the siddhis by perfecting this mudra.

In tantra this practice carries great significance. The *pancha makara* sadhana, the tantric sadhana involving five Ms: *madhu*, wine; *matsya*, fish; *mudra*, grain; *maithuna*, intercourse, and *mamsa*, meat, is greatly misunderstood, as these elements are highly symbolic. For example, khechari mudra is referred to in yogic texts as 'eating the meat of the cow'. The pancha makara sadhana prescribes vajroli mudra for men, sahajoli mudra for women and vajroni mudra for celibates. With these mudras one achieves *urdhvaretas tattwa*, the downward flowing energy can be converted into upward flowing energy.



Technique

From the verses on vajroni mudra it cannot be ascertained exactly how this practice is done, but this mudra has a link with an asana called *brahmacharyasana*, the celibate's pose. In brahmacharyasana, one sits with the legs stretched out in front of the body. The palms are placed close to the buttocks with the fingers pointing forward and the elbows straight. Pushing down with the arms, the body is lifted off the floor. The legs should be kept straight and parallel to the ground. The whole body is supported by and balanced on the hands. In the classification of asanas it is named brahmacharyasana and in the classification of mudras it is called vajroni mudra.

While doing this practice, inhale while the body remains in contact with the floor. Holding the breath in, lift the legs and buttocks off the floor. Remain in this position as long as internal breath retention can be maintained. Then return the legs and buttocks to the floor, relax and exhale.

During the practice of this asana, the entire body, urinary tract, rectum, thigh muscles, leg muscles, stomach and waist are contracted and moola bandha spontaneously occurs. It is not merely a simple application of moola bandha, but a strong locking of moola bandha. This bandha influences the vajra nadi inside the body, giving this practice its name, vajroni mudra.

Breathing: Inhale deeply, practise brahmacharya asana and internal breath retention for as long as is comfortable, return the body to the floor and then exhale. Gradually increase the length of internal breath retention without straining.

Sequence: Follow with shavasana or a comfortable relaxation posture.

Contra-indications: This is a strenuous asana and should not be practised if unwell or by people with high blood pressure or any heart ailment or hernia.

Benefits: Yogis have linked vajra nadi with the digestive process and brahmacharya, i.e. retention of the *bindu* or *veerya*, the semen. It says here, *Etad-yoga-prasaadena bindu-siddhir-bhaved-dhruvam*, the practice of vajroni mudra enables *bindu* or *veerya siddhi*, control over the semen. There are also other angles to this practice.

It is normal for men to have night emissions, which is certainly not a physical problem but can cause disturbance in the mind. During sleep, when there is no longer control over the thoughts and feelings, sexual thinking sometimes arises and passionate and lustful feelings surface. The senses are influenced and night emissions occur. It is not a physical disease or disorder, but it is said that when sense control remains weak,

especially of the reproductive sense, mental turmoil and ejaculation occur.

Some people fear that the energy or power from their body is wasted in this way, but from a physical viewpoint there is no defect or disorder. The problem lies in the mind, in the feelings of sin and *samskaras*, influences, which may have been suppressed since childhood. When a reaction starts in the body, the mind is influenced more than the body and mental disturbance, unrest and excitement develop. There may also be loss of appetite and thirst.

Mastery

Vajroni mudra is practised to control this happening. It is said that it is the greatest or most beneficial of all yogic practices, *Ayam yoge yoga-shreshtho*, and provides mastery to yogis. With due precaution and effort in this practice bindu siddhi is achieved, and for a person who attains control or mastery over bindu, nothing on this earth is impossible.

Yogis have added another line of thinking. Besides making the senses and self-control strong and powerful, when semen is conserved in the body, the life force hidden in the chromosomes is also preserved and this life force influences the chakras, the psychic centres in the subtle body. That is why it is said, *Siddhe bindau mahaayatne kim na sidhyati bhootale*, a human being can achieve victory over the earth element by means of bindu siddhi.

This principle is very simple. Mooladhara chakra is the centre of reproduction and the centre of the earth element, *bhuh* or *prithvi tattwa*. In normal life, the energy of mooladhara chakra takes the form of external energy and is discharged. That is why the asana linked to vajroni mudra is called 'brahmacharyasana', that state of body, or asana which helps a human being to attain celibacy. When this energy is conserved and preserved, then the same energy, taking the form of vital force or prana in the subtle body, is helpful in the awakening of kundalini.

It has also been said, *Bhogenā mahatā yuktō yadī mudrām samaacharet, tathāpi sakalā siddhirbhavati tasya nishchitam*, despite excessive craving and running after sensorial pleasures, all kinds of siddhis can be attained by the practice of this mudra.

8. SHAKTI CHALINI MUDRA (attitude of moving the energy)

Verses 61–72

मूलाधारे आत्मशक्तिः कुण्डली पर देवता ।
 शयिता भुजगाकारा सार्धं त्रिवलयान्विता ॥ 61 ॥
 यावत्सा निद्रिता देहे तावज्जीवः पशुर्यथा ।
 ज्ञानं न जायते तावत्कोटियोगं समभ्यसेत् ॥ 62 ॥
 उद्धाटयेत्कवाटं च यथा कुञ्चिकयाहठात् ।
 कुण्डलिन्याः प्रबोधेन ब्रह्मद्वारं प्रभेदयेत् ॥ 63 ॥
 नाभिं सम्वेष्ट्य वस्त्रेण न च नग्नो बहिः स्थितः ।
 गोपनीयगृहे स्थित्वा शक्तिचालनमभ्यसेत् ॥ 64 ॥
 वितस्तिप्रमितं दीर्घं विस्तारे चतुरङ्गुलम् ।
 मृदुलं धवलं सूक्ष्मं वेष्टनाम्बरलक्षणम् ॥ 65 ॥
 एवमम्बरयुक्तं च कटिसूत्रेण योजयेत् ।
 संलिप्य भस्मनागात्रं सिद्धासनमाचरेत् ॥ 66 ॥
 नासाभ्यां प्राणमाकृष्याप्यपाने योजयेद्बलात् ।
 तावदाकुञ्चयेद्गुह्यमश्विनीमुद्रया शनैः ॥ 67 ॥
 यावद्गच्छेत्सुषुम्णायां हठाद्वायुः प्रकाशयेत् ।
 तदा वायुप्रबन्धेन कुम्भिका च भुजङ्गिनी ॥ 68 ॥
 बद्धश्वासस्ततो भूत्वा चोर्ध्वमार्गं प्रपद्यते ।
 विना शक्तिचालनेन योनिमुद्रा न सिध्यति ॥ 69 ॥
 आदौ चालनमभ्यस्य योनिमुद्रां ततोऽभ्यसेत् ।
 इति ते कथितं चण्डकपालं शक्तिचालनम् ॥ 70 ॥
 गोपनीयं प्रयत्नेन दिने दिने समभ्यसेत् ।
 मुद्रेयं परमा गोप्या जरामरणनाशिनी ॥ 71 ॥
 तस्मादभ्यसनं कार्यं योगिभिः सिद्धिकांक्षिभिः ।
 नित्यं योऽभ्यसते योगी सिद्धिस्तस्य करे स्थिता ।
 तस्य विग्रहसिद्धिः स्याद्रोगाणां संक्षयो भवेत् ॥ 72 ॥

*Moolaadhaare aatmashaktih kundalee para devataa;
Shayitaa bhujagaakaaraa saardha trivalayaanvitaa. (61)*

*Yaavatsaa nidritaa dehe taavajjeevah pashuryathaa;
Jnaanam na jaayate taavatkotiyogam samabhyaset. (62)*

*Udghaatayetkavaatam cha yathaa kunchikayaahathaat;
Kundalinyaah prabodhena brahmadvaaram prabhedayet. (63)*

*Naabhim samveshtya vastrena na cha nagno bahih sthitah;
Gopaneeyagrihe sthitvaa shaktichaalanamabhyaset. (64)*

*Vitastipramitam deergham vistaare chaturangulam;
Mridulam dhavalam sookshmam veshtanaambaralakshanam. (65)*

*Evamambarayuktam cha katisootrena yojayet;
Samlipya bhasmanaagaatram siddhaasanamaacharet. (66)*

*Naasaabhyaam praanamaakrishyaapyapaane yojayedbalaat;
Taavadaakunchayedguhyamashvineemudrayaa shanaih. (67)*

*Yaavadgachchhetsyushumnaayaam hathaadvaayuh prakaashayet;
Tadaa vaayuprabandhena kumbhikaa cha bhujanginee. (68)*

*Baddhashvaasastato bhootvaa chordhvamaarga prapadyate;
Vinaa shaktichaalanena yonimudraa na sidhyati. (69)*

*Aadau chaalanamabhyasya yonimudraam tato'bhyaset;
Iti te kathitam chandakapaale shaktichaalanam. (70)*

*Gopaneeyam prayatnena dine dine samabhyaset;
Mudreyam paramaa gopyaa jaraamarananaashinee. (71)*

*Tasmaadabhyasanam kaaryam yogibhih siddhikaankshibhih;
Nityam yo'bhyasate yogee siddhistasya kare sthitaa;
Tasya vighrahasiddhih syaadrogaanaam sankshayo bhavet. (72)*

In mooladhara, where kundalini sleeps in the form of a serpent with three and a half coils, a living being remains in the state of an animal (ignorance) as long as the kundalini remains sleeping. Therefore, one should keep on practising until such time as knowledge manifests.

Just as a door opens only when the lock is opened with a key, in the same way brahmarandhra can only be opened when kundalini is awakened. It should be practised in a secluded place with the navel covered with a piece of cloth tied around it. Practising this mudra naked in the open is prohibited.

A soft piece of cloth (about 10 cm wide and 23 cm long) is secured around the navel by a thread tied around the waist. Smear ash on the body, sit in siddhasana and while pulling the prana, merge it with apana. Keep the anus contracted by means of ashwini mudra as long as the sushumna passage is not cleared or lighted. Thus, with the air held by kumbhaka, kundalini in the form of a serpent awakens and stands upright in the passage.

Yoni mudra cannot be perfected without the practice of shakti chalini mudra. First practise shakti chalini mudra, then practise yoni mudra. O Chandakapali! Thus practise this shakti chalini mudra daily which I have told you of, and keep it secret as far as practicable. Whosoever practises it attains all the siddhis, including vighraha siddhi, and all diseases are destroyed or overcome.

The principle of kundalini yoga is explained in brief in these verses on shakti chalini mudra which say that this mudra is one of the yogic techniques for awakening kundalini.

Sage Gheranda explains to his disciple, King Chandakapali, that *atma shakti*, spiritual energy, resides in mooladhara chakra as kundalini and is in the form of a serpent with three and a half coils and, *yaavatsaa nidritaa dehe taavajjeevah pashuryathaa, jnaanam na jaayate taavatkoti yogam samabhyaset*, as long as this shakti, energy, remains dormant or sleeping inside a human being, that person's life is just like that of an animal. This means one's consciousness is not developed and one treads the path of the *vruttis*, modifications of the mind, like an animal. Just as an animal eats when it feels hungry, sleeps when sleep overtakes it and does not think or discriminate, such a person eats when he

feels hungry, indulges in sex when he craves it and sleeps when he feels like sleeping. He remains under the influence of the gunas and in the grip of lust, passion and desires. In this state a human being cannot achieve knowledge; the consciousness cannot be expanded.

Udghaatayet-kavaatam cha yathaa kunchikayaa-hathaat, kundalinyaah prabodhena brahmadvaaram prabhedayet, just as a lock cannot be opened without a key, in exactly the same way *brahmadvara*, sahasrara, or literally, the door to Brahman, cannot be opened without awakening kundalini. According to the yogic viewpoint *brahmadvara* means the door which exists between the *para* and *apara* worlds, between the experiences of the materialistic and spiritual worlds. Only when that door opens after the awakening of kundalini shakti does a human being attain knowledge.

Mudreyam paramaa gopyaa jaraamarananaashinee, this practice or kriya is top secret. It is a destroyer (remedy) of old age and death. *Tasmaadabhyasanam kaaryam yogibhih siddhikaankshibhih*, those yogis who are desirous of attaining siddhi, mastery, should practise it with sincerity.

Technique

Take a clean, soft piece of white cloth about 10 cm wide and 23 cm long. Secure it around the navel region by tying it around the waist with a thin cotton or jute thread, so that it does not slip. Knotting the cloth is prohibited as the size of the knot would interfere with the practice. Instead of tying the cloth with a knot, ensure that it is wrapped tightly but without obstructing the blood circulation, and then secure it by tying it in place with a thread.

Samlipya bhasmanaagaatram siddhaasanamaacharet, sit in siddhasana with holy ash applied on the body. *Naasaabhyaam praanamaakrishyaapyapaane yojayedbalaat*, inhale prana vayu through the nostrils, which means to inhale deeply, taking the breath not into the chest but into the abdomen, the region of apana vayu. Retain the

breath for 5 seconds. Next, with the help of uddiyana bandha bring apana vayu upward, uniting it with the prana vayu. Due to tying the cloth over the navel region, the pressure of the air inside the body will start moving towards the rectum, where ashwini mudra is performed to direct the energy upwards. Release ashwini mudra, followed by uddiyana bandha, and gently exhale. Sage Gheranda says that this practice should be done until kundalini shakti is raised upward.

Naabhim samveshtya vastrena na cha nagno bahihsthitah, gopaneeyagrihe sthitvaa shaktichaalanamabhyaset, this is a technique of awakening kundalini. It should not be practised with the body naked. With a cloth wrapped around the waist, sit in a quiet secluded place to practise shakti chhalini mudra.

Breathing: After inhaling, retain the breath for 5 seconds. After releasing ashwini mudra and uddiyana bandha, exhale.

Duration: *Iti te kathitam Chandakapaale shaktichaalanam, gopaneeyam prayatnena dine dine samabhyaset* means that it is a secret practice which can be perfected by daily practice. In *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* the instruction is to practise for one and a half hours. This instruction is aimed at adepts. If one has been taught the practice, up to seven or nine rounds is enough for several years.

Sequence: Sage Gheranda's advice is to first practise shakti chhalini mudra, and then practise yoni mudra.

Precautions: Do not practise without the guidance of the guru. Variations of these practices are taught in kriya yoga. All require expert guidance.

Benefits: *Nityam yo'bhyasate yogee siddhistasya kare sthita*, those people who practise it daily will achieve many siddhis. *Tasya vighraha siddhih syaadrogaanaam sankshayo bhavet*, a practitioner of this mudra achieves *vighraha siddhi*, is relieved of all physical disorders and the power of reception is highly developed.

9. TADAGI MUDRA (water pot mudra)

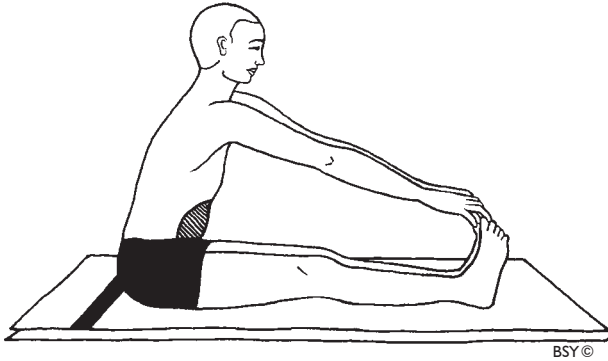
Verse 73

उदरं पश्चिमोत्तानं कृत्वा च तडागाकृतिः ।
ताडागी सा परामुद्रा जरा मृत्यु विनाशिनी ॥ 73 ॥

*Udaram pashchimottaanam kritvaa cha tadaagaakritih;
Taadaagee saa paraamudraa jaraa mrityu vinaashinee. (73)*

Sit in paschimottanasana and expand the abdomen as if it were full of water. This is an important mudra which removes the fear of old age and death.

Imagine a pot half filled with water. When the pot is moved, the water rushes first to one side then to the other. The same effect is created inside the abdomen during this practice. It is essential that the stomach is empty. The abdomen is expanded while slowly drawing the breath in. The action of breathing in this way is similar to that of water in a moving pot.



Technique

Sit with the legs stretched out in front of the body and the feet slightly apart. The legs should remain straight throughout the practice. Place the hands on the knees, keeping the head and spine straight. Close the eyes and

relax the whole body, especially the abdominal area. Lean forward and grasp the toes with the hands. The upper body is not fully bent, and the back is kept as straight as possible.

Inhale slowly and deeply, expanding the abdominal muscles to their fullest extent. Retain the breath inside for a comfortable length of time without straining the lungs in any way. Then exhale slowly and deeply while relaxing the abdomen.

Repeat the breathing up to ten times. Then release the toes and return to the starting position. This is one round.

Duration: Practise three to five rounds.

Awareness: Physically, on the abdomen. Spiritually, on manipura chakra.

Contra-indications: Pregnant women and people suffering from hernia or prolapse should avoid this practice.

Benefits: The forward bend blocks the lower part of the large and small intestines, which means that during deep inhalation, as the diaphragm contracts downward, the upper abdomen expands. On exhalation, the diaphragm relaxes upward, creating pressure throughout the trunk of the body. Tension stored in the diaphragm and pelvic floor is released. This practice tones the abdominal organs and stimulates blood circulation to these areas. It improves digestion and helps to alleviate diseases in the abdominal region. The nerve plexuses in the visceral area are stimulated and toned.

This practice is also taught to rectify incorrect breathing, or thoracic breathing and to promote abdominal breathing. Many people believe the chest should expand on inhalation and try to forcefully expand the chest while keeping the abdomen tucked in. This exerts too much pressure in the upper portions of the lungs and creates tension in the lower parts, which can result in breathing problems. The muscles of the lower lungs become weak and the lungs begin to lose their capacity.

Spiritually, tadagi mudra stimulates manipura chakra, the centre of energy distribution, and raises the level of prana generally, which is needed for higher sadhana.

10. MANDUKI MUDRA (frog mudra)

Verses 74–75

मुखं संमुद्रितं कृत्वा जिह्वामूलं प्रचालयेत् ।
शनैर्ग्रसेदमृतं तां माण्डुकीं मुद्रिकां विदुः ॥ 74 ॥
वलितं पलितं नैव जायते नित्ययौवनम् ।
न केशे जायते पाको यः कुर्यान्नित्यमाण्डुकीम् ॥ 75 ॥

*Mukham sammudritam kritvaa jihvaamoolam prachaalayet;
Shanaigrasedamritam taam maandukeem mudrikaam viduh. (74)*

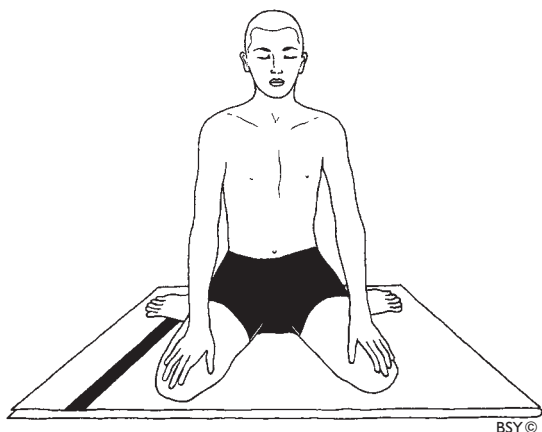
*Valitam palitam naiva jaayate nityayauvanam;
Na keshe jaayate paako yah kuryaannityamaandukeem. (75)*

Keeping the mouth closed, the tongue should be rotated inside the palate and nectar flowing from sahasrara should be slowly tasted by the tongue. This is called manduki mudra. By this practice wrinkling of the body and greying of the hair cease and permanent youth is attained.

Technique

Sit in vajrasana and separate the knees as far as possible without straining. Then separate the feet just enough to allow the buttocks and perineum to rest flat on the floor between the feet. The toes should point outward. If this is not comfortable, sit in bhadrasana with the toes pointing inward.

If this is still too difficult, place a folded blanket underneath the buttocks to apply firm pressure to the perineum, stimulating the region of mooladhara chakra. Keep the head and spine upright and straight. Close the eyes and relax the whole body.



The practice of manduki mudra is done with the mouth closed. The tongue is then rotated from right to left and up and down. This stimulates a secretion known as *shuddha* or *amrita*, nectar. Drinking this nectar can only be perfected by practice. In this mudra the rotation of the tongue to all sides is just like the jumping of a frog, hence it has been named the frog mudra.

Benefits: Those who practise this mudra never grow old. The nectar provides strength and vitality to the body. Wrinkles do not appear and the hair does not turn grey, the cells of the body are not destroyed, and maximum grace is achieved.

In kundalini yoga, the physical posture is an important practice for awakening mooladhara chakra, which is linked to perceiving divine scents in the state of meditation.

II. SHAMBHAVI MUDRA (attitude for arousing superconsciousness)

Verses 76–81

नेत्रान्तरं समालोक्य चात्मारामं निरीक्षयेत् ।
सा भवेच्छाम्भवीमुद्रा सर्वतन्त्रेषुगोपिता ॥ 76 ॥
वेदशास्त्रपुराणानि सामान्यगणिका इव ।
इयं तु शाम्भवीमुद्रा गुप्ता कुलवधूरिव ॥ 77 ॥
स एव ह्यादिनाथश्च स च नारायणः स्वयम् ।
स च ब्रह्मा सृष्टिकारी यो मुद्रां वेत्ति शाम्भवीम् ॥ 78 ॥
सत्यं सत्यं पुनः सत्यं सत्यमाह महेश्वरः ।
शाम्भवीं यो विजानीयात्स च ब्रह्म न चान्यथा ॥ 79 ॥
कथिता शाम्भवीमुद्रा श्रृणुष्व पञ्चधारणाम् ।
धारणानि समासाद्य किं न सिद्ध्यति भूतले ॥ 80 ॥
अनेन नर देहेन स्वर्गेषु गमनागमम् ।
मनोगतिर्भवेत्तस्य खेचरत्वं न चान्यथा ॥ 81 ॥

*Netraantaram samaalokya chaatmaaraamam nireekshayet;
Saa bhavechchhaambhaveemudraa sarvatantreshugopitaa. (76)*

*Vedashaastrapuraanaani saamaanyaganikaa iva;
Iyam tu shaambhaveemudraa guptaa kulavadhooriva. (77)*

*Sa eva hyaadinaathashcha sa cha naaraayanah svayam;
Sa cha brahmaa srishtikaaree yo mudraam veti shaambhaveem. (78)*

*Satyam satyam punah satyam satyamaaha maheshvarah;
Shaambhaveem yo vijaaneeyaatsa cha brahma na chaanyathaa. (79)*

*Kathitaa shaambhaveemudraa shrinushva panchadhaaranaam;
Dhaaranaani samaasaadya kim na siddhyati bhootale. (80)*

*Anena nara dehena svargeshu gamanaagamam;
Manogatirbhavettasya khecharatvam na chaanyathaa. (81)*

Steady the gaze at the eyebrow centre, on one's self, the
atma or soul, and meditate. This is shambhavi mudra. It
is a very secret tantric practice. The Vedas, shastras and
Puranas are like an ordinary woman and shambhavi mudra

is like a bride. Practitioners of this practice are themselves Adinath Narayana and Brahma, the creator of this world. Take this saying as absolutely true, that a person knowing shambhavi mudra is Maheshwara, is Brahman in reality.

Shambhavi mudra has been described above, now the series of five concentrations, pancha dharana, is explained. After having attained siddhi, mastery, over it, what work cannot be accomplished or perfected! After having attained mastery over these five concentration practices, a human being can even go to heaven and return in the body. Through these dharanas one becomes as swift as the mind and one achieves khecharatva (the ability to move in space).

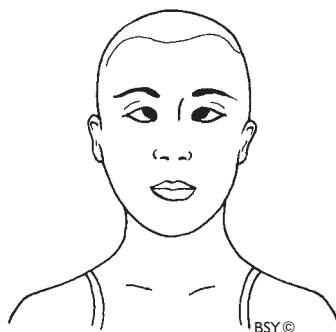
Shambhavi mudra is an extraordinary practice. *Saa bhavet-shaambhavee-mudraa sarva-tantreshu-gopitaa Veda-shaashtra-puraanaani saamaanya-ganikaa iva*, so very few people know of it that Sage Gheranda has described it using the simile of a bride from a well-to-do family, carefully guarded and protected, while he compares the status of ordinary women to the Vedas, Puranas and *shastras*, scriptures which everyone knows. Thus, for Sage Gheranda, shambhavi mudra occupies an even higher place than the Vedas, Puranas and shastras.

In this mudra one meditates on *atma roopi Ishwara*, God in the form of the soul or spirit, uniting the individual soul with the trinity of Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesha, merging with the trinity and becoming one with them. Sage Gheranda considers a practitioner of shambhavi mudra to be Mahesha (also known as Lord Shiva or Shambhu), Vishnu (also known as Narayana) and Brahma, the creator of this universe. He emphasizes, *Satyam satyam punah satyam satyamaaha maheshvarah*, that a person who has attained perfection in shambhavi mudra is truly an incarnation of the Lord.

Shambhavi mudra is, therefore, a process of psychic union and a meditative practice leading to a state of enlightenment. The asana and attitudes involved to begin with are briefly described here.

Technique

Sit in any comfortable meditation asana. Keep the head and spine upright and straight, and place the hands on the knees in either chin or jnana mudra. Close the eyes and relax the whole body. Relax all the muscles of the face, including the forehead, the eyes and behind the eyes.



Slowly open the eyes and look ahead at a fixed point, keeping the head and the whole body absolutely still. Next, look upward and inward, focusing the eyes at the eyebrow centre. The head should not move. When performed correctly, the two curved eyebrows will form a V-shaped image at the root of the nose. If the V-formation cannot be seen, the eyes are not converging as they should.

Release the eyes at the slightest sensation of strain, and close and relax them. Suspend the thought processes and meditate on the stillness in chidakasha, the dark space in front of the closed eyes.

Breathing: After mastering the eye movement, coordinate it with the breath. Breathe in slowly while raising the eyes and breathe out as the gaze is lowered.

Duration: Start with five rounds and gradually increase to ten over a period of time.

Precautions: The eyes are very sensitive and consequently the final position should not be held for too long. If the nerves are weak, any strain can cause retinal detachment. Release the position if any strain is experienced.

Contra-indications: People suffering from glaucoma should not practise this mudra. Those with diabetic retinopathy or those who have just had cataract surgery, lens implant or other eye operations should not practise without expert guidance.

Benefits: Physically, shambhavi mudra strengthens the eye muscles and releases accumulated tension in this area. Mentally, it calms the mind, removing emotional stress, anger and worries. Regular practice of shambhavi mudra retards degeneration of the pineal gland and it is therefore recommended for children from the age of eight onwards to balance emotional development. As the practice develops, many beneficial effects are experienced at subtle levels.

This practice leads to control over the mind and prana. It develops concentration, mental stability and the state of thoughtlessness. With practice, the mind becomes capable of spiritual contemplation and absorption. In kundalini yoga it is a powerful practice to awaken ajna chakra, the centre which unites the lower consciousness with the higher consciousness. If perfection is achieved in this practice, the experience of God in the form of the individual soul is bound to come. The pancha dharana should then be practised, because a practitioner then gains control over the five elements, which come under pancha tattwa dharana.

The five concentrations

Sage Gheranda recommends that after practising shambhavi mudra for a sufficiently long period, one is ready to successfully practise the pancha dharana sequence, introduced earlier in this chapter. *Kathitaa shaambhavee-mudraa shrinushva pancha-dhaaranaam, dhaaranaani samaasaadya kim na siddhyati-bhootale*. And then what is not possible? From the pancha dharana, or five concentrations, energy from the five elements of the universe: earth, water, fire, air and space, is acquired. Mastery over the five elements of nature is the culmination of the pancha dharana. An adept can go to heaven and return while still embodied. One attains the ability to direct the consciousness to travel in any direction desired.

Why does Sage Gheranda recommend the practice of shambhavi mudra before success in the pancha dharana

series can be attained? He does not say, but a hint can be obtained from the relevant verses in *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (4:36, 37), which does teach shambhavi mudra, though not the pancha dharana series: “Introverted, one-pointed awareness with an unblinking external gaze, that is shambhavi mudra, which is preserved in the Vedas. If the yogi remains with the awareness and energy absorbed in the internal object (for concentration) while the (external) gaze is motionless, though looking one is not looking, that indeed is shambhavi. When it is given with the guru’s blessing, the state of shoonyashoonya arises. That is the real state of Shiva (consciousness).”

Thus, the practice of shambhavi mudra turns the focus of awareness to the divine. While describing shambhavi mudra, Sage Gheranda says that its practitioners become Shiva themselves, become Narayana themselves and turn out to be just like Brahma. Another point to consider is that Shambhavi is one of the names of Parvati, Lord Shiva’s consort and disciple. According to the story, only one thinking process is observed in Parvati, that although she may have to take many births, she must always have Shiva’s company. The same thought existed when she took birth as Sati. It was expressed by Parvati at the time of her *tapasya*, austerities, that she would not be defeated, even if she had to take birth time and again – every time, it is her wish to attain the Shiva element: *Janma koti laum ragara hamaree; Vagaim Shambu nat rahaum kumaree*.

12. ASHWINI MUDRA (horse mudra)

Verses 82–83

आकुंचयेद् गुदद्वारं प्रकाशयेत् पुनः पुनः ।
सा भवेदश्विनीमुद्रा शक्तिप्रबोधकारिणी ॥ 82 ॥
आश्विनी परमा मुद्रा गुह्यरोगविनाशिनी ।
बलपुष्टिकरी चैव अकालमरणं हरेत् ॥ 83 ॥

*Aakunchayed gudadvaaram prakaashayet punah punah;
Saa bhavedashvineemudraa shaktiprabodhakaarinee. (82)*

*Aashvinee paramaa mudraa guhyarogavinaashinee;
Balapushtikaree chaiva akaalamaranam haret. (83)*

Contracting and expanding the anal region repeatedly is called ashwini mudra. It awakens kundalini. This mudra is the destroyer of diseases pertaining to the anus and reproductive system, the provider or enhancer of physical energy and the saviour from untimely death.

This is an important mudra. It allows the energy to flow through the body, so that the practitioner always remains healthy by acquiring strength and vitality and does not meet with an untimely death, but lives a long life. It is such a simple mudra that no difficulty is encountered while doing it. As a result of this practice, control over the anal muscles is achieved. One can expand and contract them, just like a horse, *ashwini*, does.

Technique

Sit in any comfortable meditation asana. Close the eyes and relax the body. Be aware of the natural breath.

Take the awareness to the anus. Contract the sphincter muscles of the anus and then relax them. Try to confine the action to the anal area only. The contraction and relaxation should be rhythmical. Gradually make the contractions more rapid.

Duration: Contraction and relaxation should be performed 10 to 20 times. Be careful not to strain the muscles. Increase the duration as the anal muscles become stronger and more control is developed.

Contra-indications: People suffering from anal fistula should avoid this practice.

Benefits: This practice strengthens the anal muscles and alleviates disorders of the rectum and reproductive organs such as constipation, haemorrhoids and prolapse of the uterus or rectum. In such cases, this mudra is most effective performed daily, preferably in an inverted asana. The squeezing action removes accumulated blood from the vicinity of the rectum, considered to be a contributing factor in haemorrhoids. It removes indigestion by stimulating intestinal activity, and enhances the functioning of the intestines, helping to remove constipation.

Perfection of this mudra prevents pranic energy escaping from the body, redirecting it upward for spiritual purposes. This practice is a preparation for moola bandha.

13. PASHINEE MUDRA (noose mudra)

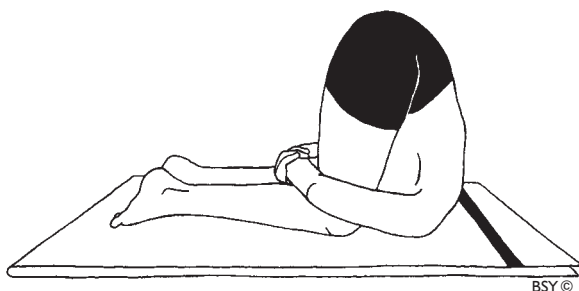
Verses 84–85

कण्ठपृष्ठे क्षिपेत्पादौ पाशवद् दृढबन्धनम् ।
सा एव पाशिनी मुद्रा शक्ति प्रबोधकारिणी ॥ 84 ॥
पाशिनी महती मुद्रा बलपुष्टि विधायिनी ।
साधनीया प्रयत्नेन साधकैः सिद्धिकाक्षिभिः ॥ 85 ॥

*Kanthaprishthe kshipetpaadau paashavad dridhabandhanam;
Sa eva paashinee mudraa shakti prabodhakaarinee. (84)*

*Paashinee mahatee mudraa balapushti vidhaayinee;
Saadhaneeyaa prayatnena saadhakaih siddhikaankshibhih. (85)*

Taking both the legs behind the neck, hold them together firmly like a noose. This is pashinee mudra for awakening energy. It provides strength and vitality. A yogi desirous of siddhi should practise it with effort.



Technique

Lie flat on the back with the legs and feet together. Place the arms beside the body with the palms facing down. Raise both legs to the vertical position, keeping them straight and together, using only the abdominal muscles. Press down on the arms and lift the buttocks, rolling the back away from the floor and lowering the legs over the head. Separate the feet by about half a metre. Bend the knees and bring the thighs towards the chest until the knees touch the ears, shoulders and floor. Wrap the arms tightly around the back of the legs. Relax the whole body in this position. Close the eyes, breathe slowly and deeply.

Maintain this position for as long as is comfortable, being aware of the stretch in the neck. Then slowly release the arms and come back to the starting position.

Sequence: This mudra should be followed by a backward bending asana.

Contra-indications: This mudra should not be practised by those suffering from hernia, slipped disc, spondylitis, sciatica, high blood pressure or any serious back problem, especially arthritis of the neck.

Benefits: This practice brings balance and tranquillity to the nervous system and induces *pratyahara*, sense withdrawal. It stretches the spine and back muscles and stimulates all the spinal nerves. It massages the abdominal organs and directs energy to the reproductive organs. Pashinee mudra strengthens the body. A successful practitioner can become capable of fulfilling all desires, because this mudra is also helpful in awakening energy, especially in mooladhara and vishuddhi chakras.

14. KAKI MUDRA (crow mudra)

Verses 86–87

काकचञ्चुवदास्येन पिबेद्वायुं शनैः शनैः ।
 काकी मुद्रा भवेदेषा सर्वरोग विनाशिनी ॥ 86 ॥
 काकी मुद्रा परा मुद्रा सर्वतन्त्रेषुगोपिता ।
 अस्याः प्रसादमात्रेण काकवन्नीरुजो भवेत् ॥ 87 ॥

Kaakachanchuvadaasyena pibedvaayum shanaih shanaih;
Kaakee mudraa bhavedeshaa sarvaroga vinaashinee. (86)

Kaakee mudraa paraa mudraa sarvatantreshugopitaa;
Asyaah prasaadamaatrena kaakavanneerujo bhavet. (87)

Inhale slowly through the mouth, shaping it like the beak of a crow. This is kaki mudra, the destroyer of all ailments. This great mudra should be kept secret by all means. By practising this mudra, relief from all disorders is achieved. Just like a crow, one becomes free from disease.

Kaki mudra may be performed at any time when the air is relatively pure, though it is best performed early in the morning or late at night. It should not be performed in cold weather. Again the text says that in all the tantras, kaki mudra is described as the best of all mudras with the potential to alleviate all diseases, and also as a top secret practice.

Technique

Sit in any comfortable meditation asana with the head and spine straight and the hands resting on the knees in either chin or jnana mudra. Close the eyes and relax the whole body. Open the eyes and perform nasikagra drishti, focusing both eyes on the nosetip.



Try not to blink the eyes throughout this practice. A crow's beak is protruding and long. Purse the lips, shaping the mouth like a crow's beak through which air may be inhaled. Inhale slowly and deeply through the pursed lips. At the end of inhalation, close the lips and exhale slowly through the nose.

Awareness: Be aware of the flow and sound of the breath, and of the nosetip.

Duration: This practice may be continued for as long as is comfortable; however, care should be taken not to strain the eyes.

Sequence: This mudra has a cooling effect in the body and may be performed after heating pranayamas to balance the body.

Precautions: Kaki mudra should not be practised in a polluted atmosphere or in excessively cold weather because the normal filtering and air-conditioning function of the nose is bypassed.

Contra-indications: People suffering from glaucoma, depression, low blood pressure or chronic constipation should avoid this practice. People suffering from diabetic retinopathy or who have had recent cataract surgery, lens implant or other eye operations should not perform this practice without expert guidance.

Benefits: Kaki mudra cools the body and mind, soothing mental tensions and alleviating disorders such as high

blood pressure. The act of pursing the lips, together with the contact of the indrawn air with the membranes of the mouth, stimulates digestive secretions, aiding the digestive process and enhancing the digestive power. As a result it provides relief from many diseases. This practice also purifies the blood. Just as it is believed that a crow is free from disease and long-lived, so Sage Gheranda says that by practising this crow mudra regularly, a human being remain will remain free from all kinds of diseases.

15. MATANGINI MUDRA (elephant mudra)

Verses 88–91

कण्ठमग्नेजले स्थित्वा नासाभ्यां जलमाहरेत् ।
 मुखात्रिर्गमयेत्पश्चात् पुनर्वक्त्रेण चाहरेत् ॥ 88 ॥
 नासाभ्यां रेचयेत् पश्चात् कुर्यादिवं पुनः पुनः ।
 मातङ्गिनी परा मुद्रा जरामृत्यु विनाशिनी ॥ 89 ॥
 विरले निर्जने देशे स्थित्वा चाैकाग्रमानसः ।
 कुर्यान्मातङ्गिनी मुद्रां मातङ्ग इव जायते ॥ 90 ॥
 यत्र यत्र स्थितो योगी सुखमत्यन्तमश्नुते ।
 तस्मात् सर्वं प्रयत्नेन साधयेत् मुद्रिकांपराम् ॥ 91 ॥

*Kanthamagnejale sthitvaa naasaabhyaam jalamaaharet;
 Mukhaannirgamayetpashchaat punarvaktrena chaaharet. (88)*

*Naasaabhyaam rechayet pashchaat kuryaadevam punah punah;
 Maatanginee paraa mudraa jaraamrityu vinaashinee. (89)*

*Virale nirjane deshe sthitvaa chaikaagramaanasah;
 Kuryanmaatanginee mudraam maatanga iva jaayate. (90)*

*Yatra yatra sthito yogee sukhamatyantamashnute;
 Tasmaat sarva prayatnena saadhayet mudrikaamparaam. (91)*

Standing in water up to the throat, inhale deeply, drawing water up through the nostrils and expelling

water out of the mouth. It should be practised repeatedly. This great mudra is known as matangini mudra. When it is perfected, there is no fear of old age and death, and a yogi becomes powerful like an elephant and always remains happy. It should be practised with concentration in a quiet, secluded place away from other people. This mudra should be perfected with sincere effort.

This practice must be performed in a pure environment with uninterrupted concentration. *Matanga* means elephant. Just as an elephant plays with water while sitting in it, the same actions are performed in this mudra. This is matangini mudra, which prevents the body from deteriorating and keeps death away.

Technique

Stand or sit in water so deep that it comes up to throat level. Draw water in through the nose. When the water reaches the mouth, expel it out through the mouth. Again draw water through the nose. Repeat the practice several times in this manner.

Benefits: The practitioner becomes powerful and strong just like an elephant. Matangini mudra is very important among the mudras, as a person practising it with effort and due care will attain *ananda siddhi*, mastery over bliss. This practice can be perfected with only a little practice.

16. BHUJANGINI MUDRA (serpent mudra)

Verses 92–93

वक्त्रं किञ्चित्सुप्रसार्य चानिलं गलया पिवेत् ।
सा भवेद् भुजङ्गी मुद्रा जरामृत्युविनाशिनी ॥ 92 ॥
यावच्च उदरे रोगमजीर्णादि विशेषतः ।
तत्सर्वनाशयेदाशु यत्र मुद्रा भुजङ्गिनी ॥ 93 ॥

*Vaktram kinchitsuprasaarya chaanilam galayaa pivet;
Saa bhaved bhujaangee mudraa jaraamrityuvinaashinee. (92)*

*Yaavachcha udare rogamajeernaadi visheshatah;
Tatsarvannaashayedashu yatra mudraa bhujaanginee. (93)*

Opening the mouth wide enough, suck air through the throat. This is known as bhujangini mudra. Once it is mastered, all abdominal disorders are removed; old age and death are eliminated.

This mudra is similar to kaki mudra. In bhujangini mudra air is sucked through the throat, keeping the mouth wide open. In this way, the air rotates in between the root of the palate and tongue, due to which the body experiences miraculous energy.

Technique

Sit in any comfortable meditative asana. Close the eyes and relax the whole body, especially the abdomen. Bring the chin slightly forward and upward. Opening the mouth fully, suck air in through the throat, trying to fill the stomach as though drinking water. Fill the stomach with as much air as possible and expand it. Try not to let air into the lungs. Hold the breath for as long as is comfortable, then expel the air by belching.

Duration: For general health, three to five rounds is sufficient.

Sequence: This mudra may be practised at any time. It is particularly powerful when practised after shankha-prakshalana.

Benefits: This practice tones the whole stomach, removes stagnant wind and helps to alleviate abdominal disorders. Retaining air in the stomach enables the practitioner to float in water for as long as desired.

CONCLUSION

Verses 94–100

इदं तु मुद्रापटलं कथितं चण्डकापाले ।
वल्लभं सर्वसिद्धानां जरामरणनाशनम् ॥ 94 ॥
शठाय भक्तिहीनाय न देयं यस्य कस्यचित् ।
गोपनीयं प्रयत्नेन दुर्लभं मरुतामपि ॥ 95 ॥
ऋजवे शान्तचित्ताय गुरुभक्तिपराय च ।
कुलीनाय प्रदातव्यं भोगमुक्ति प्रदायनम् ॥ 96 ॥
मुद्राणां पटलं ह्येतत्सर्वव्याधि विनाशकम् ।
नित्यमभ्यास शीलस्य जठराग्निविवर्धनम् ॥ 97 ॥
तस्य नो जायते मृत्युर्नास्य वार्धक्यमायते ।
नाग्निजलभयं तस्य वायोरपि कुतो भयम् ॥ 98 ॥
कासः श्वासः प्लीहा कुष्ठं श्लेष्मरोगाश्च विंशतिः ।
मुद्राणां साधनाच्चैव विनश्यन्ति न संशयः ॥ 99 ॥
बहुना किमिहोक्तेन सारं वच्मि च चण्ड ते ।
नास्ति मुद्रासमं किञ्चिद् सिद्धिदं क्षितिमण्डले ॥ 100 ॥

*Idam tu mudraapatalam kathitam chandakaapaale;
Vallabham sarvasiddhaanaam jaraamarananaashanam. (94)*

*Shathaaya bhaktiheenaaya na deyam yasya kasyachit;
Gopaneeyam prayatnena durlabham marutaamapi. (95)*

*Rijave shaantachittaaya gurubhaktiparaaya cha;
Kuleenaaya pradaatavyam bhogamukti pradaayanam. (96)*

*Mudraanaam patalam hyetatsarvavyaadhi vinaashakam;
Nityamabhyaasa sheelasya jatharaagnivivardhanam. (97)*

*Tasya no jaayate mrityurnaasya vaardhakyamaayate;
Naagnijalabhayam tasya vaayorapi kuto bhayam. (98)*

*Kaasah shvaasah pleehaa kushtham shleshmarogaashcha vimshatih;
Mudraanaam saadhanaachchaiva vinashyanti na samshayah. (99)*

*Bahunaa kimihoktena saaram vachmi cha chanda te;
Naasti mudraasammakinchid siddhidam kshitimandale. (100)*

O Chandakapali! Here I have told you about the various mudras, which all fulfil the desires of keeping away old age and death. Do not teach them to evil or undeserving people who lack devotion. These mudras are not even accessible to the gods. Both worldly enjoyments and liberation are attained through these mudras. They should only be imparted to those who have surrendered themselves to the guru, belong to a good family and whose minds are the abode of peace.

With daily practice all diseases are eliminated and the digestive fire is activated. The worries of old age and death disappear. A practitioner is neither touched by death nor old age, nor has any fear of water, air or fire. Twenty types of kapha problems such as asthma and colds are eliminated by practising the described mudras. There is no doubt about this.

O Chanda! I have explained to you everything about mudras and there is nothing else to tell you. There is no other practice in the world like mudra which enables you to achieve success and completeness.

After having clarified the techniques and importance of all the mudras, Sage Gheranda once again alerts the king regarding their significance and usage.

Sage Gheranda described seven yogic techniques in the tenth and eleventh verses of the first chapter. The first one was *shatkarmana shodhanam*, through shatkarmas purification of the body takes place. The second, *asanena bhavet-dridham*, through asanas physical and mental stability and strength

are achieved. The third, *mudraya sthirata*, through mudras steadiness is experienced. Next comes, *pratyaharena dheerata*, through pratyahara, patience is achieved by separating the mind from the senses.

Three categories of mudras

In this chapter Sage Gheranda has given three categories of practices while describing the mudras. The first category is bandha, the second is dharana and the third is mudra. While describing the bandhas, he has talked about three basic bandhas or locks: moola bandha, uddiyana bandha and jalandhara bandha. The effect of the bandhas on the chakras and prana has been explained. Moola bandha influences mooladhara and swadhisthana chakras; uddiyana bandha influences manipura and anahata chakras; and jalandhara bandha influences vishuddhi and ajna chakras. Sage Gheranda has also discussed maha bandha.

Dharana is mental one-pointedness. The purpose of the dharana techniques is to awaken the five elements by focusing the mind on one element at a time, thus achieving the full experience of that element. The scope of these dharana practices is from mooladhara to vishuddhi.

In the category of mudras, the stability or steadiness that Sage Gheranda describes can be understood to mean the stability of pranamaya kosha and manomaya kosha.

Stabilizing body, mind and energy

He has already discussed physical and mental stability (but mostly steadiness of the body) while describing the asanas. When the asana is steady, then the physical body becomes stable, or one can say the experience of stability and strength in *annamaya kosha*, the physical body, can be obtained by the practice of asanas.

After *annamaya kosha*, *manomaya kosha*, the mental body, and *pranamaya kosha*, the energy body, remain. Sage Gheranda has divided manomaya kosha into various parts. In the next chapter he will explain that by pratyahara,

mental stability and patience are achieved. Patience is to be attained by controlling *manas shakti*, the mental energy. In order to bring manomaya kosha under control and make oneself balanced, it is important to first of all attain one-pointedness of mind.

The mind is restless at first, and it is the same with prana. The purpose of the mudras is to stop this pranic restlessness and to bring one-pointedness, controlling mental restlessness. The prana shakti must be made calm and quiet, but how and where?

Until now only some forms of prana have been understood. One form of prana is noticed in the *pancha pranas*, the five pranas: prana, apana, samana, udana and vyana. Another form is observed in the *chakras*, the psychic centres. In fact, one form of prana is in mooladhara, a second in swadhisthana, a third in manipura, a fourth in anahata and a fifth in vishuddhi. So the prana existing in the chakras and pancha pranas are two different states of prana. The experience of the pancha pranas is a gross state relative to the experience of prana shakti in the chakras, which is a much subtler state.

Sage Gheranda brings the process and experience of the gross and subtle pranas under the control of consciousness through the practices of bandha, mudra and dharana. As long as there is no conscious control over the prana, the energy cannot be consciously awakened or produced. Therefore, for the smooth and controlled flow of prana, he primarily advocates the practice of mudras to focus the mind, stop its external restlessness and achieve one-pointedness.

Following this, pratyahara and pranayama practices are discussed. In these practices, an effort is made to take the mind to another state which comes when restlessness has subsided. Sage Gheranda is of the opinion that stability is first achieved through the practice of mudras. Pratyahara comes next in the sequence. Then, after gaining conscious control over the gross and subtle pranas, an effort is made to enter into another region of prana through pranayama.

Chapter Four

Pratyahara

Pratyahara

INTERNALIZING THE MIND

The process of controlling the mind through the medium of the senses is called *pratyahara*. In this chapter the knowledge of pratyahara is imparted in brief by Sage Gheranda to his disciple, King Chandakapali. He begins with a description of patience by combining it with the senses. His analysis is based on the understanding that patience is impeded by negative or positive feelings in the mind which arise due to the various experiences of the senses. In his opinion, if the mind is separated from those sensory feelings and experiences, their effects will automatically stop. In this way, an internalized state of mind will be achieved.

One point needs to be understood first. By declaring that patience is achieved, there is an inference that in certain situations patience is lost. It is difficult to say which viewpoint Sage Gheranda kept in mind while putting forward this idea, but if one thinks about the times patience is lost, it is possible to trace a psychological secret behind this behaviour. After catching hold of the thread of this secret, the description of pratyahara can be continued.

Attachments

According to yoga, a human being loses patience due to attachments, particularly those forms of attachment where

personal likes, wishes, desires, selfishness and satisfaction are hidden. Attachment is linked to all these internal elements, because they merge together and give birth to attachments in their external form. Attachment is born from the union of the feelings of selfishness, desires, higher aims and ego.

How can attachments originate from the ego and wishful thinking? Wishful thinking is a desire to see oneself in another form. A poor man wants to see himself as a millionaire. A selfish person wants all their desires fulfilled and wants to boost their ego by possessing the smallest and the biggest thing. When selfish motives such as these are hidden, attachment takes birth to motivate and justify fulfilment of the desire.

Attachment is born out of ego, because in ego there is a hidden desire to increase the size of the individual self. There is a hidden desire to impress others, there is a hidden energy to push back others and their experiences, and to assert 'I'. When one looks at the mind objectively and observes different states manifesting, then attachment in some form or other will definitely be seen.

Due to this attachment, the mental energies become scattered and restless instead of remaining one-pointed. It is said that restlessness is the nature of the mind, but it must be realized that the amount of rest the mind has in the steady state is not achieved in the restless state, and so restlessness cannot be the true nature of the mind. The mind can be compared to a small boy who is very restless all day, who keeps on running or jumping, but eventually reaches a point where he becomes calm and quiet, and sleeps. In the same way, it is the nature of the mind to be restless, but the basic position of the mind is to be calm, and in this calm state it once again charges itself with energy.

Sensual heat

When the consciousness, awareness and intellect lose their balance in the heat of this restlessness, there is a lack of patience. When balance is lost under the influence of the

feelings, one feels like immediately doing something to fulfil the selfish motives and desires. The senses use their energies to make the mind restless and to fulfil that selfish desire, because the energy of the senses is pleasure-seeking. This can be noticed even in small incidents. If a person starts beating a drum mercilessly without any rhythm, other people will make him stop, but if an experienced person starts singing or playing an instrument, one will be totally engrossed in it because the music is pleasant to the ears. The sense of hearing enjoys the sound and its selfish motive is fulfilled. In exactly the same manner, all the senses wish to enjoy and draw pleasure to themselves. The eyes always want to see pleasant things; the tongue always wants good tastes; the skin always wants to experience a pleasing touch.

Returning to centre

If the entire awareness is attracted towards one thing or running after one sense only and the knowledge gained from that sense is understood, it can be regarded as a process in the development of consciousness. But the mind is divided and scattered in different directions. Thus all the senses, whether of knowledge or activity, attract a part of the mind's awareness in its scattered state. This causes stress, distress and disappointment instead of gaining knowledge. So it can be seen how the senses are one reason for loss of patience.

People wish that their children would live, act and behave as they tell them to. They expect their colleagues to accept them as good people, to see all their good qualities and respect them. Even with members of the family they put on a particular type of veil or mask and live their external lives behind that mask.

Such imbalances manifest as obstructions to the development of consciousness. All these are considered to be the reasons why the *antahkarana*, inner organ of consciousness, becomes unbalanced. Due to this type of understanding, Sage Gheranda recognized that the balance should not be disturbed, there should be no lack of awareness and

patience should not be lost. In order to achieve or regain this fundamental patience, he gives the following discourse to King Chandakapali.

EXPLANATION OF THE SIX ENEMIES

Verses 1–7

अथातः सम्प्रवक्ष्यामि प्रत्याहारकमुत्तमम् ।
यस्य विज्ञानमात्रेण कामादिरिपुनाशनम् ॥ 1 ॥
यतो यतो निश्चरति मनश्चञ्चलमस्थिरम् ।
ततस्ततो नियम्यैतदात्मन्येव वशं नयेत् ॥ 2 ॥
यत्र यत्र गता दृष्टिर्मनस्तत्र प्रयच्छति ।
अतः प्रत्याहरेदेतदात्मन्येव वशं नयेत् ॥ 3 ॥
पुरस्कारं तिरस्कारं सुश्राव्यं वा भयानकम् ।
मनस्तमान्नियम्यैतदात्मन्येव वशं नयेत् ॥ 4 ॥
शीतं चापि तथा चोष्णं यन्मनस्संस्पर्शयोगतः ।
तस्मात्प्रत्याहरेदेतदात्मन्येव वशं नयेत् ॥ 5 ॥
सुगन्धे वाऽपि दुर्गन्धे मनो घ्राणेषु जायते ।
तस्मात्प्रत्याहरेदेतदात्मन्येव वशं नयेत् ॥ 6 ॥
मधुराम्लकतिक्तादिरसं गतं यदा मनः ।
तस्मात्प्रत्याहरेदेतदात्मन्येव वशं नयेत् ॥ 7 ॥

*Athaatah sampravakshyaami pratyaaahaarakamuttamam;
Yasya vijnaanamaatrena kaamaadiripunaashanam. (1)*

*Yato yato nishcharati manashchanchalamasthiram;
Tatastatato niyamyaitadaatmanyeva vasham nayet. (2)*

*Yatra yatra gataa drishtirmanastatra prayachcchati;
Atah pratyaaaharedetadaatmanyeva vasham nayet. (3)*

*Puraskaaram tiraskaaram sushraavyam vaa bhayaanakam;
Manastamaanniyamyaitadaatmanyeva vasham nayet. (4)*

*Sheetam chaapi tathaa choshnam yanmanassamsparshayogatah;
Tasmaatpratyaaaharedetadaatmanyeva vasham nayet. (5)*

*Sugandhe vaa'pi durgandhe mano ghraaneshu jaayate;
Tasmaatpratyaaaharedetadaatmanyeva vasham nayet. (6)*

*Madhuraamlakatiktaadirasam gatam yadaa manah;
Tasmaatpratyaaaharedetadaatmanyeva vasham nayet. (7)*

Now I will explain the highest pratyahara. By this practice, enemies like lust, etc., are destroyed.

Wherever this restless mind travels, bring it back, putting it under the control of the self, the soul or spirit.

Wherever one looks the mind follows; therefore withdraw it and put it under the control of the self.

Take the mind off words which are respectful or insulting, pleasing or displeasing to the hearing and put it under the control of the self.

Cold and heat affect the mind through the sense of touch; therefore withdraw it and put it under the control of the self.

Take the mind from both the fragrant and the obnoxious odours that distract it and put it under the control of the self.

If the mind becomes attracted towards tastes which are sweet, alkaline, sour, etc., take it away from these and place it under the control of the self. This is pratyahara.

Sage Gheranda said that knowledge of pratyahara eliminates the enemies of human beings such as selfish wishes, greed, desires, etc. He says one who has to face dishonour or receive praise should not allow that to influence the mind. It is a pratyahara sadhana to maintain a normal state of mind even in difficult or adverse situations. One does not have to feel proud at the time of fame, or display happiness at the time of pleasure, or feel sad while in pain, or become angry in a dishonourable situation.

Inner resolve

Moreover, whenever the mind tries to run here and there and starts losing concentration, then with firm *sankalpa*

shakti, power of resolution, it should again be brought back to its calm centre. A person who lives according to the situation does not encounter many problems, but performs tasks and lives according to the restrictions of the time. However, if such a happy-go-lucky person is aware that he is not managing his mind correctly, how should he practise *pratyahara*?

If the mind is attracted to and obsessed with entertainment, even when it is not the right time, then the *sankalpa shakti* must be awakened and self-control should be practised, bearing in mind the situation and one's own limitations. This much inner understanding should be developed, but how will it manifest inside? From whom shall one understand? There is a lack of awareness. Even one's own desires are not known. Sometimes only their symptoms are seen in the form of a wish or an attachment. How can understanding be developed?

Self-analysis

Yoga has devised a method. Yoga says first of all recognize the weaknesses by means of self-analysis. Observe the situations in which balance and patience are lost. When does disappointment start having an effect? These tendencies can be known through regular introspection. Then, by expanding and awakening the witnessing consciousness, one can separate oneself from that stressful, negative situation and the automatic reaction that has been programmed inside. As soon as this detachment takes place, pleasure and peace will roll over one's feet.

How can self-analysis be practised? There is a very simple method. At night time when going to bed, just before sleeping, mentally review the entire daily routine and also observe where a reaction took place. Wherever a knee-jerk reaction was expressed, there is definitely some weakness, because this type of reaction only happens when one is hurt in some way and cannot bear with it. Whether it relates to oneself or to others cannot be understood straight away,

but understanding begins with smaller things and ends with bigger things. If a weakness and its cause are gradually understood, then keeping that weakness in mind, an effort can be made to change the thoughts and behaviour. Thus self-analysis or introspection is carried out through the medium of the *karmas*, deeds or actions.

Observing the senses

After this comes the second stage, which is to observe the experiences of the senses. What type of experiences are being obtained through the senses? First observe and analyze one sense, then two, then three, then four and then at the end, all five senses. Do not only see whatever is observed and experienced within the domain of each sense, but try to maintain awareness of the whole spectrum. It is a very difficult practice, because the human brain behaves like the minute hand of a clock. It stops at one place, then a second place, then a third place and so on. The entire breadth of experience cannot be observed in just one vision.

The process of awareness stopping and starting every minute just like the minute hand of a clock is a normal state, but it is not the state of pratyahara. In the state of pratyahara, the round is completed in one flow, just like the second hand, and one's perception of consciousness also increases. When one's power of consciousness increases, one can focus on a point or flow, and this state becomes *dharana*, concentration. Many people think that pratyahara means withdrawing the senses inwards, like a tortoise withdraws its limbs inside its shell, but this is not the technique of pratyahara.

In the first stage of pratyahara, an effort is made to observe the entire mental plane in just one glimpse, in one go, by rotating the perception like the second hand. In the second stage, awareness is combined with it. After this, the third stage is to observe subtle experiences, i.e. to observe the mind.

Observing the mind

In order to be a seer, a witness of the mind, first of all those thoughts which are manifesting in the mind are observed. After that an effort is made to get to know and understand the reason behind the thoughts. The thought which is seen as the cause is brought into the mental awareness. Observing that reason in thought form, one then observes its reason and then further observes its reason too. In this way a thought is picked up and one goes into the depths of the thought process to where that thought originated, where it is linked with the ego, desires, personal wishes and selfish attitudes, and then a curtain is placed over that thought.

When thoughts do not arise, it does not automatically mean that the thoughts have been stopped; it does not mean that the mind is thoughtless. If the mind became thoughtless, devoid of feelings and intellect, then the very existence of the mind would cease. One would instantly attain *moksha*, liberation, just by practising pratyahara, but it does not happen like that. By 'stopping the thoughts', yoga means catching hold of the thought-feeling, knowing and understanding it all the way to the root cause.

If the beginning of the basic or root thought is due to ego, that shortcoming should be eliminated by overcoming the ego problem. If it is taking place because of another person, then that shortcoming should be recognized. It should be kept in mind that the knowledge exists in one's selfish nature, that the deficiency is in one's ego and ambition. Then one should try to find the path by which that deficiency can be removed. If this can be accomplished, one is no longer the slave of the *vrittis*, or mental modifications.

Vrittis

The *Yoga Sutras* of Sage Patanjali mentions five types of vrittis: *pramana*, right knowledge; *viparyaya*, wrong knowledge; *vikalpa*, imagination; *nidra*, meaning unconsciousness or ignorance rather than just sleep, and *smriti*, memory. The vrittis are linked with thoughts, because many thoughts are

based on pramana and many are based on viparyaya or vikalpa or nidra or smriti. This is one way of self-analysis, observing the link between the vrittis and the thoughts. Becoming aware of one's state of mind helps in attaining a steady and one-pointed state of antahkarana, which is called *dharana* or concentration.

In this process, as knowledge of the senses is gained by practising awareness of them, one also becomes aware of the other activities originating inside the mental element. If one becomes fully aware of the senses, their influence on the conscious, subconscious and unconscious mind is measured. No stress is then created by the senses. Just like water flowing without any obstruction, mental energy starts flowing towards the inner centre, uninterrupted.

Pratyahara practice

Pratyahara means stopping the flow of thoughts towards external things and reversing its direction. When this flow changes direction, it is called the state of pratyahara, the state of internalization. The task definitely appears to be tough, but when the senses are controlled through the practice of pratyahara, the mind is automatically controlled.

Be aware that tranquil patience is the true inner state of the mind. Notice when patience is lost due to the heating effect of the senses, which makes desires bubble up and the state of mind become dissipated and disturbed. Summon the sankalpa shakti, the inner resolve, and practise self-analysis. Notice the attachments, and from them determine the role of the ego, selfishness and desire in oneself. Notice the defensive reactions and discover the weaknesses.

On a daily basis, practise *observing* the input of the senses rather than merely being directed by it. Begin by working with one sense and build the awareness until all the senses and their combined effect can be noticed. Notice thoughts within the mind. Practise *observing* the thoughts rather than merely being directed by them. Practise observing their connection to the senses, to the vrittis, to the antahkarana.

Practising a meditative review of the day before sleeping, using these guidelines, will develop the ability to curb desires of the senses and thoughts that do not reflect one's higher resolve or sankalpa. One will be able to drop desires born of unproductive conditioning and focus on discovering one's inner self and how to express it in life.

Desires are responsible for our pain and suffering. Once these are checked and under control, then what sort of pain or agony is there? Thus pratyahara destroys the cause of pain at its root. Thereafter the mind can be engaged in higher sadhana.

Chapter Five

Pranayama

Pranayama

YOGIC BREATHING PROCESS

Prana means life force, and *ayama* signifies regulation or control. Thus *pranayama* means regulating the life force. Sages have linked this life force with the breath in a gross form. Every living being breathes and through the medium of the breath, the flow of prana and life in the body takes place. If one stops inhaling, the lack of pranas in the body is felt, discomfort and unrest prevail and if one is forced to keep on holding the breath, death finally comes. For this reason the sages have linked the breath with the life force. According to them, physical health can be gained by controlling prana shakti through the practices of pranayama, thus sustaining the body. In this context Sage Gheranda says the following.

Verse 1

अथातः संप्रवक्ष्यामि प्राणायामस्य सद्बिधिम् ।
यस्य साधनमात्रेण देवतुल्यो भवेन्नरः ॥ १ ॥

*Athaatah sampravakshyami praanaayamasya sadvidhim;
Yasya saadhanamaatreṇa devatulyo bhavennarah.*

Now I shall explain the technique of pranayama, by the mere practice of which a human being becomes like a deva or god.

Sage Gheranda has compared the human body to a *deva sharira*, the body of a divine being or god, which is pure, clean, light, free from disease and luminous. He has taught pranayama with the intention of achieving such a divine body. This indicates that many problems can be eliminated by pranayama practice. Pranayama is the basis of the yogic management of disease. Diseases can be divided into three groups.

The first group is psychosomatic. Disorders related to this group begin with the mind, feelings and thinking. Worries and disturbances like anger, jealousy and hatred, which originate in the mind, influence the body and its internal activities, and various symptoms begin to arise.

The second group consists of disorders due to pranic blockages. When there are obstructions in the flow of prana, and the breathing process is disturbed, ailments related to breathing and blood pressure develop.

The third group originates externally, the external environment affects the body. Diseases like malaria, cholera and many others are caused by bacteria and viruses attacking the body; other causes are pollution and irregular or uncontrolled eating.

Yoga recognizes these three most common causes of disease. There are also many other minor causes and ailments which can be managed with yogic techniques. Sage Gheranda prescribes pranayama for the treatment of all diseases linked with the breathing system and the flow of prana. In the present era, research has proved that a large number of psychosomatic, somopsychic diseases and mental imbalances like distress and worry can be removed by pranayama.

In order to practise pranayama, it is essential to follow certain rules. Intense pranayama sadhana cannot be practised under normal conditions: a separate place, separate food and separate guidelines are required. Normally, the guidelines advocated for the practice of pranayama are simply to keep the body and mind healthy and balanced, and to focus the mind. But to gain more benefits, strict rules must be observed.

Verse 2

आदौ स्थानं तथा कालं मिताहारं तथापरम् ।
नाडीशुद्धिं ततः पश्चात्प्राणायामं च साधयेत् ॥ २॥

*Aadau sthaanam tathaa kaalam mitaahaaram tathaaparam;
Naadeeshuddhim tatah pashchaatpraanaayaamam cha saadhayet.*

First select the place and time, eat moderately and purify the nadis. After this, pranayama should be practised.

Aadau sthaanam, firstly a place for the practice of pranayama should be chosen. *Tathaa kaalam*, after this a time should be fixed. The practices of pranayama should only be done at the correct time and place. *Mitaahaaram tathaaparam*, then moderate food should be organized. *Naadeeshuddhim tatah pashchaatpraanaayaamam cha saadhayet*, when the place, time and food have been arranged, then before commencing pranayama, the nadis should be purified.

Generally speaking, the rules pertaining to the place and time prescribed for yoga practice are well known.

1. Pranayama should be practised during brahmamuhurta, not during the daytime. *Brahmamuhurta* means the two hours around dawn, between 4 and 6 am, best suited to yoga sadhana.
2. When the air is mild, slow and cool, not too cold and not too hot, pranayama should be practised.
3. Pranayama should never be practised in a closed room. Keep the windows and doors open to ensure that pure air can enter. However, the place should not be so airy or windy that the blast of the wind can be felt inside the room.
4. If the air is slightly cool or chilly, cover the body with a shawl or wear a vest. The body should not be allowed to come into direct contact with cold air. The practice of pranayama is also prohibited if there is sweating due to intense heat.

There is another reason for doing practices in the morning. Electrically charged particles in the atmosphere, called negative ions, are fewer during the daytime due to the heat. Their reduced number means that at the time of pranayama the body cannot experience energy and agility, and instead stress and distress may be experienced. There is freshness in the early morning environment, indicating a high number of negatively charged ions in the air. By doing pranayama at that time, those ions full of electrical energy enter the body and provide energy and vitality.

Sage Gheranda continues describing the environment for pranayama in detail.

DECIDING ON THE PLACE

Verses 3–7

दूरदेशे तथाऽरण्ये राजधान्यां जनान्तिके ।
 योगारम्भं न कुर्वीत कृतश्चेत्सिद्धिहा भवेत् ॥ 3 ॥
 अविश्वासं दूरदेशे अरण्ये रक्षिवर्जितम् ।
 लोकारण्ये प्रकाशश्च तस्मात्त्रीणिविवर्जयेत् ॥ 4 ॥
 सुदेशे धार्मिके राज्ये सुभिक्षे निरुपद्रवे ।
 कृत्वा तत्रैकं कुटीरं प्राचीरैः परिवेष्टितम् ॥ 5 ॥
 वापी कूपतडागं च प्राचीर मध्यवर्ति च ।
 नात्युच्चं नातिनिम्नं च कुटीरं कीटवर्जितम् ॥ 6 ॥
 सम्यग्गोमयलिप्तं च कुटीरं तत्र निर्मितम् ।
 एवं स्थानेषु गुप्तेषु प्राणायामं समभ्यसेत् ॥ 7 ॥

*Dooradeshe tathaa'ranye raajadhaanyaam janaantike;
 Yogaarambham na kurveeta kritashchetsiddhihaa bhavet. (3)*

*Avishvaasam dooradeshe aranye rakshivarjitam;
 Lokaaranye prakaashashcha tasmaattreenivivarjayet. (4)*

*Sudeshe dhaarmike raajye subhikshe nirupadrave;
 Kritvaa tatraikam kuteeram praacheeraih pariveshtitam. (5)*

*Vaapee koopatadaagam cha praacheera madhyavarti cha;
Naatyuchcham naatininnam cha kuteeram keetavarjitam. (6)*

*Samyaggomayaliptam cha kuteeram tatra nirmitam;
Evam sthaaneshu gupteshu praanaayaamam samabhyaset. (7)*

Yogic practices should not be done in a far-off place, in a forest, in a capital city or in a crowd, otherwise there will be loss of siddhi, lack of success. Far-off places are forbidden because no one can be believed in a distant country, a forest is an insecure place, and in a capital city there is excessive population. Therefore, all three places are prohibited for pranayama. It should be done in a beautiful spiritual region, where food is readily available, and the country is free from internal or external disturbances. Making a hut there, construct a boundary around it. There should be a well or a water source. The ground on which that hut is constructed should be neither too high nor too low, plastered with cow dung, free from insects and in a secluded place. Pranayama should be practised there.

Pranayama should not be practised in a distant country, forest or in a capital city which has undue light and noise due to the large population. For the practice of pranayama both an absolutely secluded place and an overcrowded place are prohibited. Sage Gheranda says that a new practitioner must observe these rules strictly.

By doing the practices in distant forests, a practitioner will not gain the support of other people. By practising in an overcrowded city, everyone will watch. Therefore, the choice of both places is wrong. The point to be borne in mind is that in ancient times it was thought that an ordinary person should not obtain this yogic knowledge. Therefore, Sage Gheranda, according to his thinking, has instructed that a practitioner should construct a hut in a peaceful spiritual place, *Sudeshe dhaarmike raajye subhikshe nirupadrave*, where food products are easily available and there are no conflicts.

Kritvaa tattraikam kuteeram praacheeraih pariveshtitam, there should be a boundary wall around the hut. *Vaapee koopatadaagam cha praacheera madhyavarti cha*, within that boundary wall there should be a well or a small pond for the water supply. This is the main requirement of a practitioner. Wherever one lives, one should have enough water. Swami Satyananda used to say that the place does not make any difference. Whether there is a house or trees does not matter, but there should be sufficient water, because water quenches the thirst and pure air flows in the water complex. When air is in contact with water, it causes the humidity and temperature to be favourable.

Naatyuchcham naatinimnam cha kuteeram keetavarjitam, the ground on which the hut is constructed should be neither too high nor too low and there should be no animals there. Once again Sage Gheranda is educating aspirants on purity. The place should be plastered with cow dung, which is a pure substance that helps keep away insects and is easily kept clean, and it should be away from noise and disturbances.

Sage Gheranda gave these instructions according to the needs of that era and the feelings of those people. In the present era, when yoga has become quite common, when the population is increasing, and even pilgrimage places are becoming polluted, the place of practice should be selected with much consideration.

DECIDING ON THE TIME

Verses 8–15

हेमन्ते शिशिरे ग्रीष्मे वर्षायां च ऋतौ तथा ।
योगारम्भं न कुर्वीत कृते योगो हि रोगदः ॥ 8 ॥
वसन्ते शरदि प्रोक्तं योगारम्भं समाचरेत् ।
तदा योगी भवेत्सिद्धो रोगान्मुक्तो भवेद्भ्रुवम् ॥ 9 ॥
चैत्रादिफाल्गुनान्ते च माघादिफाल्गुनान्तिके ।
द्वौ द्वौ मासावृतुभागावनुभावश्चतुश्चतुः ॥ 10 ॥
वसन्तश्चैत्रवैशाखौ ज्येष्ठाषाढा च ग्रीष्मकौ ।
वर्षाश्रावणभाद्राभ्यां शरदाश्विनकार्तिकौ ।
मार्गपौषौ च हेमन्तः शिशिरो माघफाल्गुनौ ॥ 11 ॥
अनुभावं प्रवक्ष्यामि ऋतूनां च यथोदितम् ।
माघादिमाधवान्तेषु वसन्तानुभवं विदुः ॥ 12 ॥
चैत्रादि चाषाढान्तं च निदाघानुभवं विदुः ।
आषाढादि चाश्विनान्तं प्रावृषानुभवं विदुः ॥ 13 ॥
भाद्रादि मार्गशीर्षन्तं शरदोऽनुभवं विदुः ।
कार्तिकान्माघमासान्तं हेमन्तानुभवं विदुः ।
मार्गदीर्घचतुरो मासाञ्जिशिरानुभवं विदुः ॥ 14 ॥
वसन्ते वापि शरदि योगारम्भं समाचरेत् ।
तदा योगो भवेत्सिद्धो विनाऽऽयासेन कथ्यते ॥ 15 ॥

*Hemante shishire greeshme varshaayaam cha ritau tathaa;
Yogaarambham na kurveeta krite yogo hi rogadah. (8)*

*Vasante sharadi proktam yogaarambham samaacharet;
Tadaa yogee bhavetsiddho rogaanmukto bhaveddhruvam. (9)*

*Chaitraadiphaalgunaante cha maaghaadiphaalgunaantike;
Dvau dvau maasaavritubhaagaavanubhaavashchatushchatuh. (10)*

*Vasantashchaitravaishaakhau jyeshthaashaadhaa cha greeshmakau;
Varshaashraavanabhaadraabhyaam sharadaashvinakaartikau;
Maargapaushau cha hemantah shishiro maaghaaphaalgunau. (11)*

*Anubhaavam pravakshyaami ritoonaam cha yathoditam;
Maaghaadimaadhavaanteshu vasantaanubhavam viduh. (12)*

*Chaitraadi chaashaadhaantam cha nidaaghaanubhavam viduh;
Aashaadaadi chaashvinaantam praavrishaanubhavam viduh. (13)*

*Bhaadraadi maargasheeshantam sharado'nubhavam viduh;
Kartikaanmaaghamaasaantam hemantaanubham viduh;
Maargaadeemshchatur maasaanshishiraanubhavam viduh. (14)*

*Vasante vaapi sharadi yogaarambham samaacharet;
Tadaa yogo bhavetsiddho vinaa'yaasena kathyate. (15)*

Yogic practices should not be commenced during winter, extreme cold, summer or the rainy season. If yogic practices are undertaken during these seasons, it leads to the spread of diseases.

It is correct to start the practices during spring and autumn. When yogic practices are undertaken during these seasons, one certainly attains success and becomes free from diseases.

There are twelve months in a year from Chaitra (March) to Phalguna (February), and six seasons, each of two months duration.

In practice, each season is experienced for four months, from Magha (January) to Phalguna (February). There are seasons of two months each and also experiences of four months each.

Chaitra to Vaishakha (March–April) is spring (vasanta); Jyeshtha to Ashadha (May–June) is summer (ghrishma); Shravana to Bhadrapada (July–August) is the rainy season (varsha); Ashwina to Kartika (September–October) is autumn (sharada); Marga Shirsha to Pausha (November–December) is winter (hemanta); and Magha to Phalguna (January–February) is extremely cold (shishira).

From Magha to Vaishakha (January–April) spring is experienced; from Chaitra to Ashadha (March–June) summer; from Ashadha to the end of Ashwina (June–September) monsoon rains; from Bhadrapada to Marga Shirsha (August–November) autumn; from Kartika to Magha (October–January) winter; and from Marga

Shirsha to Phalguna (November–February) extreme cold is experienced.

It has been said that one attains success by commencing yogic practices during spring and autumn.

After discussing the place, Sage Gheranda discusses the season during which yoga practices should be undertaken. Incidentally, the weather has not only been discussed in the context of practising pranayama, but also for the other yogic practices.

The normal rules regarding the seasons are very clear. It is said that yogic practices should not be commenced during summer, monsoon and winter. That is, when the temperature is extremely cold or extremely hot, or during the rains when the weather fluctuates from cold to hot. There are no restrictions for those who are regular yoga practitioners, but when starting the practices, commence during spring or autumn, when the weather is fresh and it is neither too hot nor too cold.

Yoga practices should not be commenced during winter (*hemanta*), extreme cold (*shishira*), summer (*ghrishma*), or the rainy season (*varsha*). Sage Gheranda warns that if the practices are begun during this period, diseases will manifest. Diseases do manifest during this period if yogic practices are undertaken, particularly in the case of pranayama. If the weather is disregarded when commencing the practices, then due to the heat that is generated, boils, fever, the common cold, etc., tend to develop.

Yoga practices should be commenced during spring and autumn, then the yogi attains perfection and diseases are removed. It is essential for the body to be able to adjust to, and be in harmony with, the changes that take place internally as a result of yogic practices, otherwise problems will arise. If yogic practices are begun when the weather is right, the body, environment and atmosphere are also favourable, and one can bear with the changes taking place in the body and mind. Tolerance also increases, and so this

change has a positive effect. If there is no tolerance, there will be a negative effect.

After discussing the months, Sage Gheranda says that the complete year from Chaitra to Phalguna has been divided into six parts. In this view of the year, each season is considered to be two months in length, *Dvau dvau maasaavritubhaagaavanubhaavashchatushchatuh*. Sage Gheranda says, for example, that the months of Magha to Phalguna, which correspond roughly to January and February, are considered as one season. But in the following verses he explains that for practicality a year has been divided into three parts.

While describing the Hindi months and seasons in detail, Sage Gheranda gives instructions about the settings of different seasons, based on his experiences. In a practical way, dividing the seasons into durations of four months each, he declares that the four months from Magha to Vaishakha (January–April) are spring; Chaitra to Ashadha (March–June) are summer; Ashada to the end of Ashwina (June–September) are rainy; Bhadrapada to Marga Shirsha (August–November) are autumn or moderately cold; Kartika to Magha (October–January) are winter; and Marga Shirsha to Phalguna (November–February) can be extremely cold.

Vasante vaapi sharadi yogaarambham tu samaacharet, Sage Gheranda considers spring (vasanta) and autumn (sharada), when it is moderately cold, to be the best seasons for commencing pranayama because only during these seasons can it be practised without obstacles. The number of pranayamas should also be reduced or increased according to the weather.

Normally in yoga, pranayama is divided into three parts. First, there are those pranayamas which generate heat and activity in the body and enhance the activity of the sympathetic nervous system. In the second group are those pranayamas which provide coolness, calmness and a state of relaxation to the body and enhance the activity of the parasympathetic nervous system. The third group comprises

those pranayamas which balance the activities of both the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems. The instructions state that the third group of pranayamas can be practised during any month, because they are helpful in balancing the body's activity and temperature.

Those practices which enhance heat in the body are mostly undertaken during cold weather and those practices which cool the body are performed during hot weather. That is why Sage Gheranda says that pranayamas should be practised according to the seasons.

Tadaa yogo bhavetsiddho vinaaa'yasena kathyate, but for regular practitioners no season need be a barrier or obstacle to the practices. When one becomes established in the advanced practices, their effects are by no means unnatural for the sadhaka. Pranayama remains beneficial as it has become part of the daily routine. Therefore, the above advice is not meant for experienced practitioners.

BALANCED DIET

Verses 16–22

मिताहारं विना यस्तु योगारम्भं तु कारयेत् ।
 नानारोगो भवेत्तस्य किञ्चिद्योगो न सिध्यति ॥ 16 ॥
 शाल्यन्नं यवपिष्टं वा तथा गोधूमपिष्टकम् ।
 मुद्गं माषचणकादि शुभ्रं च तुषवर्जितम् ॥ 17 ॥
 पटोलं सुरणं मानं कक्कोलं च शुकाशकम् ।
 द्राढिकां कर्कटीं रम्भां दुम्बरीं कण्टकण्टकम् ॥ 18 ॥
 आमरम्भां बालरम्भां रम्भादण्डं च मूलकम् ।
 वार्ताकीं मूलकं ऋद्धिं योगी भक्षणमाचरेत् ॥ 19 ॥
 बालशाकं कालशाकं तथा पटोलपत्रकम् ।
 पञ्चशाकं प्रशंसीयाद्वास्तूकं हिमलोचिकाम् ॥ 20 ॥
 शुद्धं सुमधुरं स्निग्धमुदरार्धविवर्जितम् ।
 भुज्यते सुरसंप्रीत्या मिताहारमिमं विदुः ॥ 21 ॥
 अन्नेन पूरयेदर्धं तोयेन तु तृतीयकम् ।
 उदरस्य तुरीयांशं संरक्षेद्वायुचारणे ॥ 22 ॥

*Mitaahaaram vinaa yastu yogaarambham tu kaarayet;
Naanaarogo bhavettasyakinchidyogo na sidhyati. (16)*

*Shaalyannam yavapishtam vaa tathaa godhoomapishtakam;
Mudgam maashachanakaadi shubhram cha tushavarjitam. (17)*

*Patolam suranam maanam kakkolam cha shukaashakam;
Draadhikaam karkateem rambhaam dumbareem kantakantakam. (18)*

*Aamarambhaam baalarambhaam rambhaadandam cha moolakam;
Vaartaakeem moolakam riddhim yogee bhakshanamaacharet. (19)*

*Baalashaakam kaalashaakam tathaa patolapatrakam;
Panchashaakam prashamseeyaadvaastookam himalochikaam. (20)*

*Shuddham sumadhuram snigdhamudaraardhavivarjitam;
Bhujyate surasampreetyaa mitaahaaramimam viduh. (21)*

*Annena poorayedardham toyena tu triteeyakam;
Udarasya tureeyaamsham samrakshedvaayuchaarane. (22)*

A practitioner who undertakes yoga without moderating the diet suffers from many diseases and does not make progress in yoga. A practitioner should eat food prepared from rice, barley or wheat flour, and pulses such as green gram (mung), black gram (urad) and horse gram, which have been cleaned. Parval, jack fruit, certain root vegetables and berries, bitter gourd (karela), cucumber, figs, plantain (banana) and its stem and root, eggplant (brinjal), medicinal roots and fruits, and seasonal fresh leafy green vegetables can be eaten. Five leafy green vegetables similar to spinach (balashaka, kalashaka, patolapatraka, vashtaka and himalochika) are recommended. The stomach should be half filled with pleasing, pure, sweet, cooling, oily or lubricating materials until satisfied, and half of the stomach should be left empty. Learned people have termed it mitahara, meaning balance, control or moderation in eating. Half of the stomach should be filled with food, a quarter with water and the fourth quarter left empty for the circulation of air.

Sage Gheranda says that pranayama practitioners should eat a moderate, balanced diet, otherwise the full benefit of the practices will not be derived. Also, eating unsuitable or unseasonable food leads to the possibility of physical ailments. The sages have thoughtfully prescribed some dietary rules from ancient times. Wherever discussion about diet or food takes place, these rules about which vegetables or fruits should be taken during monsoon or winter are considered. Thus, for each season a different type of food is recommended. These rules are particularly observed in villages. In the modern era, with refrigeration, people have begun keeping and preserving out of season vegetables and fruits, but according to yoga, consuming unseasonable food has detrimental effects on the body. Furthermore, Sage Gheranda says that a sadhaka should eat less and should consume a balanced diet.

Rotis or chapatis made by mixing rice, wheat, barley, grams and urad dal are considered best for yogis. Vegetables and fruits like jack fruit, parval, bitter gourd (karela), eggplant (brinjal), cucumber, figs, unripe bananas (plantain), etc., can also be eaten. Seasonal green vegetables are also useful. In fact, a wide range of food is beneficial for pranayama, because when pranayama is practised, heat is generated in the body, which starts to dissolve the excess fat in the body. That is why pranayama practitioners take ghee (clarified butter), so that the body fat which is reduced during pranayama is replenished.

Sage Gheranda has also prescribed rules regarding the quantity of food to be taken. It is said that not too much food should be eaten. The rule for food intake is that half the stomach should be filled with food, one quarter should be filled with water and the remaining one quarter should be left empty for the circulation of air. Eating until the stomach is full is prohibited. Thus, physical health is maintained by consuming food which causes no discomfort or stomach problems.

PROHIBITED FOODS

Verses 23–31

कट्वम्लं लवणं तिक्तं भृष्टं च दधितक्रकम् ।
शाकोत्कटं तथा मद्यं तालं च पनसं तथा ॥ 23 ॥
कुलत्थं मसुरं पाण्डुं कूष्मान्दं शाकदण्डकम् ।
तुम्बीकोलकपित्थं च कण्टबिल्वं पलाशकम् ॥ 24 ॥
कदम्बं जम्बीरं बिम्बं लकुचं लशुनं विषम् ।
कामरङ्गं पियालं च हिङ्गुशाल्मलिकेमुकम् ॥ 25 ॥
योगारम्भे वर्जयेच्च पथिस्त्रीवह्निसेवनम् ॥ 26 ॥
नवनीतं घृतं क्षीरं शर्कराद्यैक्षवं गुडम् ।
पक्ववर्म्भां नारिकेलं दाडिम्बमशिवाम्बम् ।
द्राक्षां तु लवलीं धात्रीं रसमम्लविवर्जितम् ॥ 27 ॥
एलाजातिलवङ्गं च पौरुषं जम्बुजाम्बलम् ।
हरीतकीं च खर्जूरं योगी भक्षणमाचरेत् ॥ 28 ॥
लघुपाकं प्रियं स्निग्धं तथा धातुप्रपोषणम् ।
मनोऽभिलषितं योग्यं योगी भोजनमाचरेत् ।
कठिनं दुरितं पूतिमुष्णं पर्युषितं तथा ।
अतिशीतं चातिचोष्णं भक्ष्यं योगी विवर्जयेत् ॥ 29 ॥
प्रातःस्नानोपवासादि कायक्लेशविधिं तथा ।
एकाहारं निराहारं यामान्ते च न कारयेत् ॥ 30 ॥
एवं विधि विधानेन प्राणायामं समाचरेत् ।
आरम्भे प्रथमे कुर्यात्क्षीराज्यं नित्यभोजनम् ।
मध्याह्ने चैव सायाह्ने भोजनद्वयमाचरेत् ॥ 31 ॥

*Katvamlam lavanam tiktam bhrishtam cha dadhitakrakam;
Shaakotkatam tathaa madyam taalam cha panasam tathaa. (23)*

*Kulattham masuram paandum kooshmaandam shaakadandakam;
Tumbeekolakapittham cha kantabilvam palaashakam. (24)*

*Kadambam jambeeram bimbam lakucham lashunam visham;
Kaamarangam piyaalam cha hingushaalmalikemukam. (25)*

Yogaarambhe varjayechna pathistreevahnisevanam. (26)

*Navaneetam ghritam ksheeram sharkaraadyaikshavam gudam;
Pakvarambhaam naarikelam daadimbamashivaasavam;*

Draakshaam tu lavaleem dhaatreem rasamamlavivarjitam. (27)

*Elaajaatilavangam cha paurusham jambujaambalam;
Harvetaakeem cha kharjooram yogee bhakshanamaacharet. (28)*

*Laghupaakam priyam snigdham tathaa dhaatupraposhanam;
Mano'bhilashitam yogyam yogee bhojanamaacharet;
Kathinam duritam pootimushnam paryushitam tathaa;
Atisheetam chaatichoshnam bhakshyam yogee vivarjayet. (29)*

*Praatahsnaanopavaasaadi kaayakleshavidhim tathaa;
Ekaahaaram niraahaaram yaamaante cha na kaarayet. (30)*

*Evam vidhi vidhaanena praanaayaamam samaacharet;
Aarambhe prathamē kuryaatsheeraajyam nityabhojanam;
Madhyaahne chaiva saayaahne bhojanadvayamaacharet. (31)*

When commencing yogic practice, one should avoid bitter, sour or acidic, salty and astringent foods, fried food, curd, buttermilk, heavy vegetables, wine, palm nuts and over-ripe jack fruit. Consuming foods such as horse gram and lentils, pandu fruit, pumpkin and vegetable stems, gourds, berries, limes, garlic, asafoetida, etc., is prohibited.

A beginner should avoid excess travelling, the company of women, or warming himself by the fire. Fresh butter, clarified butter, milk, jaggery, sugar, daal, amalaki, pomegranate, grapes, ripe bananas, etc., should also not be used. Cardamom, cloves, nutmeg, stimulants, haritaki and dates can be taken. Only foods which are easily digestible, agreeable, lubricating, strengthening and acceptable to the mind should be eaten. Hard, polluted, stale, heating, extremely cold and extremely hot foods should be avoided.

Early morning bathing and fasting, which cause discomfort to the body, should be discarded. Having only one meal a day, not eating at all or eating between meals should be discontinued. Prior to commencing pranayama practice, one should have milk and ghee daily and eat two meals a day, one at noon and one in the evening.

Now Sage Gheranda tells us about food products forbidden for pranayama practitioners. It is not known on what pretext, but he has also mentioned here that a male practitioner on the yogic path should avoid the company of women or warming himself by the fire. Maybe he has prescribed this as an external discipline in order to maintain internal control, because initially the sexual urge increases as heat is generated in the body by pranayama practice. When a person practises in a secluded place or under the direction of a guru, he can maintain inner control, but if he does not stay in an isolated place and the guru is also not close by, it is possible to lose control in the heat of the moment. Maybe that is why Sage Gheranda has repeated these rules for observing physical control and celibacy.

He also declares that it is not beneficial for yogis to eat either cold or very hot foods, which cause extreme changes in body temperature. Here it can be mentioned for today's students that chilled water should not be drunk immediately after pranayama or dynamic exercise, or on coming in from the sun. Water should be normal temperature, not chilled. It should be left for at least five to ten minutes if it has been chilled. This is recommended in order to maintain normal body temperature.

Sage Gheranda also says that a pranayama practitioner should not eat sour, acidic or over-salted foods, or condiments and fried foods in excess. Beginners should not consume curd or sour vegetables, onions, cauliflower, etc. The food products mentioned are native to India, but one must use common sense and avoid foods which tend to increased pitta (acidity) or produce gas.

In describing such rules Sage Gheranda says that vata (gas), pitta (heat) and kapha (mucus) related to the digestive system should be kept under control and not aggravated. Milk produces kapha, so here Sage Gheranda is overturning the normal idea that yogis should drink a lot of milk. He also lists ginger, sugar and dried fruits, the specific reason being that there should be no excessive desire for taste sensations.

Cardamom, cloves, haritaki, etc., can be used as they help in the digestion of food. He has permitted the use of pure ghee (clarified butter), but not the use of butter. Ghee is made by heating butter and skimming off the white foam so that only pure ghee remains. The foam in butter hides the sour taste which increases acidity or pitta in the body. To summarize, food should be easily digestible, light and energy producing. The stomach should not feel heavy or the body lethargic after eating.

Sage Gheranda has also said that one should not bathe immediately before or after pranayama practice. If the body temperature drops and pranayama is practised immediately afterwards, it will have an adverse effect. The normal rule is to practise asanas after bathing in order to normalize the body temperature before pranayama practice. If this routine is followed, bathing prior to pranayama practice is valid and justified.

Sage Gheranda also says that fasting for more than twenty-four hours should not be observed, because pranayama creates heat in the body and the body needs to be strong to maintain the practice. However, he also says that fasting for one meal a day can be done. This will at least enable the body to maintain some energy. Eating snacks between meals is not beneficial.

Finally, Sage Gheranda says that milk can be taken. First he has forbidden the drinking of milk and then he says that milk can be taken along with food. From this it can be inferred that milk should probably not be taken on an empty stomach. Milk is digested when taken with food and does not remain inside the stomach. If it is taken at night time before sleeping, it remains in the stomach and the nutritional elements of the milk are not digested properly due to dominance of the parasympathetic nervous system.

In summary, a yogi should observe these main rules. First of all pranayama should be practised. Then milk and ghee should be taken with food. Food should be taken regularly but only twice, once in the morning and once in the evening.

PURIFICATION OF THE NADIS

Verse 32

कुशासने मृगाजिने व्याघ्राजिने च कम्बले ।
स्थूलासने समासीनः प्राङ्गमुखो वाप्युदङ्मुखः ।
नाडीशुद्धिं समासाद्य प्राणायामं समभ्यसेत् ॥ 32 ॥

*Kushaasane mrigaajine vyaaghraajine cha kambale;
Sthoolaasane samaaseenah praangamukho vaapyudanmukhah;
Naadeeshuddhim samaasaadya praanaayaamam samabhyaset.*

On a seat of kusha grass, or deer skin, or tiger skin or a blanket, facing east or north, pranayama should be practised after purifying the nadis.

Sage Gheranda's instruction regarding the seat, *asana*, for pranayama practice is that it should be neither too hard nor too soft.

It needs to be understood first that the practice of pranayama concerns the flow of prana in the body and the process of pranic awakening. However, awakening the prana and the free flow of prana is possible only when all the nadis in the body become free of obstructions. He considers *nadi shuddhi*, purification of the nadis, as essential prior to commencing pranayama. By purifying the nadis, many other gross obstructions are removed. A physiological clean-out is one side effect. For example, with the correct diet and the correct use of the shatkarmas, the circulatory system is rejuvenated and the correct amount of blood is supplied to the brain, which in turn removes mental tensions.

चण्डकापालिरुवाच

नाडीशुद्धिं कथं कुर्यान्नाडीशुद्धिस्तु कीदृशी ।
तत्सर्वं श्रोतुमिच्छामि तद्वदस्व दयानिधे ॥ 33 ॥

घेरण्ड उवाच

मलाकुलासु नाडीषु मारुतो नैव गच्छति ।
प्राणायामः कथं सिद्धयेत्तत्त्वज्ञानं कथं भवेत् ।
तस्मान्नाडीशुद्धिमादौ प्राणायामं ततोऽभ्यसेत् ॥ 34 ॥
नाडीशुद्धिर्द्विधा प्रोक्ता समनुनिर्मनुस्तथा ।
बीजेन समनुं कुर्यान्निर्मनुं धौतिकर्मणा ॥ 35 ॥
धौतिकर्म पुरा प्रोक्तं षट्कर्मसाधने यथा ।
श्रुणुष्व समनुं चण्ड नाडीशुद्धिर्यथा भवेत् ॥ 36 ॥
उपविश्यासने योगी पद्मासनं समाचरेत् ।
गुर्वादिन्यासनं कुर्याद्यथैव गुरुभाषितम् ॥ 37 ॥
नाडीशुद्धिं प्रकुर्वीत प्राणायामविशुद्धये ।
वायुबीजं ततो ध्यात्वा धूम्रवर्णं सतेजसम् ॥ 38 ॥
चन्द्रेणपूरयेद्वायुं बीजं षोडशकैः सुधीः ।
चतुःषष्ट्या मात्रया च कुम्भकेनैव धारयेत् ।
द्वात्रिंशन्मात्रया वायुं सूर्यनाड्या च रेचयेत् ॥ 39 ॥
नाभिमूलाद्वह्निमुत्थाप्य धायेत्तेजोवनीयुतम् ॥ 40 ॥
वह्निबीजषोडसेन सूर्यनाड्या च पूरयेत् ॥ 41 ॥
चतुःषष्ट्या च मात्रया कुम्भकेनैव धारयेत् ।
द्वात्रिंशन्मात्रया वायुं शशिनाड्या च रेचयेत् ॥ 42 ॥
नासाग्रे शशधृग्विम्बं ध्यात्वा ज्योत्स्नासमन्वितम् ।
ठं बीजं षोडशेनैव इडया पूरयेन्मरुत् ॥ 43 ॥
चतुःषष्ट्या मात्रया च वं बीजेनैव धारयेत् ।
अमृतं प्लावितं ध्यात्वा नाडीधौतिं विभावयेत् ।
द्वात्रिंशेन लकारेण दृढं भाव्यं विरेचयेत् ॥ 44 ॥

Chandakaapaaliruvaacha:

Naadeeshuddhim katham kuryaannaadeeshuddhistu keedrishee;
Tatsarvam shrotumichchhaami tadvadasva dayaanidhe. (33)

Gheranda uvaacha:

Malaakulaasu naadeeshu maaruto naiva gachchhati;
Praanaayaamah katham siddhyettattvajnaanam katham bhavet;

Tasmaannaadeeshuddhimaadau praanaayaamam tato'bhyaset. (34)

*Naadeeshuddhirdvidhaa proktaa samanurnirmanustathaa;
Beejena samanum kuryaannirmanum dautikarmanaa. (35)*

*Dhautikarma puraa proktam shatkarmasaadhane yathaa;
Shreenushva samanum chanda naadeeshuddhiryathaa bhavet. (36)*

*Upavishyaasane yogee padmaasanam samaacharet;
Gurvaadinyaasanam kuryaadyathaiva gurubhaashitam. (37)*

*Naadeeshuddhim prakurveeta praanaayaamavishuddhaye;
Vaayubeejam tato dhyaatvaa dhoomravarnam satejasam. (38)*

*Chandrenapooryedvaayum beejam shodashakaih sudheeh;
Chatuhshashtyaa maatrasyaa cha kumbhakenaiva dhaarayet;
Dvaatrimshanmaatrasyaa vaayum sooryanaadyaa cha rechayet. (39)*

Naabhimoolaadvahnimutthaapya dhaayettejovaneeyutam; (40)

Vahnibeejashodasena sooryanaadyaa cha poorayet. (41)

*Chatuhshashtyaa cha maatrasyaa kumbhakenaiva dhaarayet;
Dvaatrimshanmaatrasyaa vaayum shashinaadyaa cha rechayet. (42)*

*Naasaagre shashadhrigbimbam dhyaatvaa jyotsnaasamanvitam;
Tham beeja shodashenaiva idasya poorayenmarut. (43)*

*Chatuhshashtyaa maatrasyaa cha vam beejenaiva dhaarayet;
Amritam plaavitam dhyaatvaa naadeedhautim vibhaavayet;
Dvaatrimshena lakaarena dridham bhaavyam virechayet. (44)*

Chandakapali asked: How is nadi shuddhi (purification of the nadis) to be done? What is its form? I want to listen to all this in detail. O kind-hearted one, be kind and gracious enough to tell me.

Sage Gheranda replied: If air cannot flow through the nadis because they are full of waste products, how can pranayama be perfected, and how can tattwa jnana (subtle knowledge) manifest? That is why one must first perform purification of the nadis, which is of two types: samanu and nirmanu. Purification of the nadis performed along with the bija mantra is called samanu,

the one performed with the practice of dhauti karma is called nirmanu. A description of dhauti has already been given in the shatkarmas. Now listen, Chanda, to the samanu technique by which the nadis can be purified.

Sitting on a seat, a yogi should assume padmasana and perform guru nyasa (rotation of consciousness over different parts of the body). Then according to the directions of the guru, practise purification of the nadis in order to practise pranayama.

Keeping in mind the vayu bija mantra *Yam* यं, inhale through the chandra marga (left nostril), repeating the bija mantra 16 times. In the meditative state one should consider this vayu bija to be the colour of bright smoke. Thus after pooraka (inhalation) through the left nostril, one should perform kumbhaka (holding the breath), repeating the mantra 64 times, and then repeating it 32 times perform rechaka (exhalation) through the right nostril.

Raise agni tattwa (fire element) from the navel centre and meditate on its light associated with earth. Keeping in mind the *Ram* रं bija and repeating this mantra 16 times one should inhale through the surya nadi (right nostril), perform kumbhaka while repeating it up to 64 times and then exhale through the left nostril, repeating the mantra 32 times.

Focus the mind on the image of the moon at the nosetip and repeat the bija manta *Tham* ठं 16 times while inhaling through the left nostril. One should retain the breath in sushumna, repeating the bija mantra *Vam* वं 64 times. One should fix the mind on the flow of nectar from the moon at the tip of the nose and clean all the nadis with it. Then one should exhale through the right nostril by repeating the *Lam* लं bija mantra 32 times.

Beginning the discussion on pranayama practice, Sage Gheranda tells the king that *nadi shuddhi*, purification of the nadis, should be practised first. The king then asks three questions: first, what is nadi shuddhi; second, how it should

be practised, and third, what are the characteristics of this practice.

In response, Sage Gheranda once again starts explaining that when an obstruction takes place in a *nadi*, a flow of *prana shakti* or vital energy, a person can neither practise pranayama nor gain knowledge of the physical elements until these nadis are purified. There are many nadis in the body. Just as flowers are woven into a garland, in a similar manner these nadis are interwoven and due to their intermingling, obstructions sometimes take place.

Sage Gheranda explains that the practice of nadi shuddhi can be done in two ways: *samanu* and *nirmanu*. *Samanu* nadi shuddhi is practised using the help of a *bija*, seed, mantra and the practice of *nirmanu* nadi shuddhi means practising dhauti karma.

Samanu nadi shuddhi

The process of *samanu nadi shuddhi* is psychic. Sage Gheranda has advocated the use of *bija* mantras because then knowledge of the physical elements is also obtained through the process of nadi shuddhi. But in the beginning, when a person starts practising, the awareness simply moves with the breath mentally; one focuses only on the breathing process. The mantra is added later, synchronized with breath awareness in order to go deeper into the practice. The *bija* mantras of the elements are adopted one at a time, and with that *bija* mantra the practice of *dharana* (concentration) is carried out. That is why the process of *samanu nadi shuddhi* can be described as a mental process. Also, in this practice, by controlling the breath, one directs it through different nadis and chakras regulated by a particular element to make them free of obstructions.

Nirmanu nadi shuddhi

The second process, *nirmanu nadi shuddhi*, is primarily a physical one, and it has already been covered in Chapter 1 under dhauti kriya. Dhauti kriya cleanses and removes defects

of the lungs and the respiratory and digestive systems, and the internal organs become free from disorders. Awakening of the pranas is then automatically achieved and at that time an effort is made to direct the prana in the nadi network.

Technique

In relation to the first technique Sage Gheranda says that a practitioner should sit in padmasana and practise *guru nyasa* according to the directions of the guru. In this practice the consciousness is rotated around the different parts of the body, to the feet, knees, fingers, chest, back, face, etc., so that if there is any kind of tension there, one becomes aware of it and the stiffness is removed.

Guru nyasa – subtle awareness

Generally, when people are instructed to sit upright and straight during the practice of pranayama, they tense the body. If they are told to keep the hands straight, they tighten the whole arm and it becomes difficult to explain to them how the position of the body should be at the beginning of pranayama. The body should be straight, but in a relaxed posture, not tense or tight. Sage Gheranda has mentioned nyasa here in order to bring the body into a state of relaxation. He also says that the nadis of the body are purified by this practice. In this practice one touches each part of the body and the different chakras with one's awareness, along with the chanting of mantras.

There are two techniques of nyasa, the first is tantric and the second is vedic. In the vedic technique the names of the parts of the body are recited in the form of mantras, for example, *Om namo angushthaabhyaam, karatalaabhyaam namah, anaamikaabhyaam namah*, etc. This recitation of the appropriate mantra is done with concentration on each part of the body. The only difference between vedic nyasa and tantric nyasa is that in vedic nyasa the mantras are recited along with pronunciation of the names of those organs, whereas in tantric nyasa those organs are visualized in chidakasha.

Nyasa has been prescribed here for the purpose of purifying the nadis. Each and every part of the body must be touched by chanting the mantras and this should include visualization in chidakasha. There is also a scientific explanation for this process. There is a section inside the brain which has been called a homunculus or symbolic mini-human being. It is like a neuronal map of the physical body existing within the brain. All the body parts through which the awareness passes during the rotation of consciousness can be located within this mini-human, which controls the sensations created in each specific part of the body, and maintains the balance between sensitive and hyperactive sensations.

In the scientific tradition of nyasa, the name of each part is not said quickly or in a confused manner. On the contrary, while practising concentration on that part, the corresponding brain centre is brought into a state of relaxation. When the mantras are chanted while focusing the attention on a particular part and visualizing that part, an influence is exerted over the whole brain. A difference in the activities of the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems can be observed and simultaneously a difference in the electric currents or waves generated inside the brain is also noticed. They become calmer and more controlled, enhancing one-pointedness and making the mind more aware of the subtle states of the body.

Tattwa and mantra – increasing subtlety

The sage says that after anga nyasa one has to focus the attention on *Yam* यं, the bija mantra of *vayu tattwa*, the air element, and imagine the body to be in the form of smoke, or a smoke screen. Through this process, an effort is being made to make the consciousness subtle and then extremely subtle. First there is relaxed physical consciousness which gradually becomes less, and awareness of pranamaya kosha is awakened. This is why the instruction is to observe oneself as a smoke screen, as though the body is not made of bones,

flesh and blood, but of particles of smoke. Visualization of *pranamaya kosha*, the energy body, is practised in the form of a smoky body. Recall the smoke observed rising from the light of a burning candle near a window; *pranamaya kosha* is to be imagined in exactly this way.

Chanting of the mantra *Yam* यं should be done 16 times while inhaling through the left nostril, *chandrenapoorayedvaayum beejam shodashakaih suddheeh*. Remember that pranayama is not a beginner's practice. When pranayama is first taught, a ratio such as Sage Gheranda advocates here is not used. The sage is discussing pranayama in the fifth chapter, implying that one needs to have reached a suitable state of control over the breath and physical activities by completion of the shatkarmas, asanas, mudras, bandhas, pratyahara and dharanas before commencing these pranayama practices. In the technique given here, one inhales up to 16 counts, retains the breath inside for up to 64 counts and exhales through the right for up to 32 counts. This counting is done along with the mantra *Yam* यं.

Sage Gheranda then tells the king that the next part of the process focuses the attention on *agni tattwa*, the fire element, in the navel region. Concentrating the attention on the light of the fire, he should focus on the navel centre. After this he should inhale through *surya swara*, the right nostril. During the course of inhalation, the agni bija mantra *Ram* रं should be chanted 16 times. With internal breath retention, the agni bija mantra should be chanted 64 times, and then while reciting the agni bija mantra 32 times, exhale through *chandra swara*, the left nostril. Thus the breathing process through the nostrils should be in the ratio of 1:4:2. This is in fact similar to one round of advanced nadi shodhana pranayama (refer to *Asana Pranayama Mudra Bandha* by Swami Satyananda Saraswati).

Sage Gheranda then mentions the third process. In this, one has to imagine the shining moon at the nosetip and inhale through the left nostril along while chanting *Tham* ठं bija mantra 16 times, then practise internal retention up to a count of 64 with *Vam* वं and exhale through the right nostril

repeating *Lam* लं 32 times. In this practice also the ratio of the breath should be 1:4:2.

The technique described here is a higher technique and relates to other practices such as *tattwa shuddhi*, purification of the elements.

Learning correct breathing

The purpose of nadi shuddhi is to purify the nadis in the body and to remove disorders or obstructions from the flow of prana of which they are composed. There are several stages of nadi shuddhi.

First of all one needs to understand where breathing takes place. Normally the breath is uncontrolled and unsystematic. The correct breathing technique is to fully use the capacity of the lungs so that growth in respiratory capacity and expansion in pranic energy may be experienced. So the first stage is to learn the correct breathing technique, i.e. to breathe into the abdomen. There are several methods for this practice.

To start with, the arms can be stretched out in front of the body, making the hands into fists. When the fists are stretched out, the belly is filled with air so that the abdomen rises. When the fists are brought close to the body again, the abdomen is pulled in, pressing the diaphragm upwards and emptying the lungs. This is one method. It should not be done quickly, but carried out slowly, so that there is complete control over the breathing process.

Another method can be practised while lying down, with a flower placed over the navel. While inhaling, remember to expand the abdomen so that the flower can be seen rising upward. While exhaling, remember to pull the abdomen downward so that the flower can be seen moving down. This is an easy method of learning the correct breathing technique.

Strengthening the breath

In the second stage, a long deep breath is inhaled and exhaled slowly through one nostril while blocking the other. It should be repeated 5, 10, 15 times or until there

is smoothness and comfort in the breathing process. Next, repeat the same number of breaths through the other nostril. Continue in this way until the breathing process becomes smooth and comfortable.

In the third stage, inhale through the left nostril and exhale through the right nostril, then inhale through the right and exhale through the left. This is one round. With every round an effort should be made to keep the breath slow. Make each breath as long and as deep as is comfortable without straining. Repeat this practice also, from 5 to 20 times.

In the next stage, counting is introduced along with the breath. Count the length of the inhalation and exhalation. Make the length of the inhalation and exhalation the same, whether the count is 5, 10, 15 or 20. Then the count should be gradually increased. When the length of inhalation and exhalation has increased significantly after some weeks or months of practice, and there is no difficulty or discomfort in breathing in and out with an extended breath, no experience of a lack of air in the lungs, then kumbhaka is added.

Kumbhaka

First of all *antaranga kumbhaka*, internal breath retention, is performed. Inhalation, retention and exhalation are performed in a particular ratio. To begin with, all three are in the same ratio. Inhalation is performed through the left nostril, the breath is held internally and then exhaled through the right nostril. Then inhalation is through the right, followed by retention, then exhalation through the left nostril. The length of internal retention is also increased very gradually, so that no kind of tension is created in the body after retaining the breath.

In the next stage, *bahir kumbhaka*, external breath retention, is added to the practice and its duration is also gradually increased.

After this, the same count is applied to inhalation, exhalation, internal and external breath retention. According

to other yogic texts this equalizing stage is practised until a minimum count of 12 can be held comfortably. That means the inhalation is for a count of 12, internal retention is held for a count of 12, exhalation for a count of 12 and external retention is held for a count of 12. Only when proficiency is achieved in the ratio 1:1:1:1 at the count of 12:12:12:12, should the ratio be changed.

The next ratio should be is 1:2:1:1, inhalation, internal retention, exhalation and external retention. When proficiency is achieved in this ratio, the count can be gradually increased for some months.

In the next stage, external retention is also made equal to internal retention. The ratio is 1:2:1:2.

Gradually, over a period of months or years of regular practice, the ratio of inhalation, internal retention, exhalation and external retention is increased through various stages. Finally, the ratio of 1:4:2:2 is attained. In this way the practice of nadi shuddhi, purification of the nadis, is perfected in about nine stages.

Pranayama is a practice that cannot be mastered in a day or a month or a year. And remember that here Sage Gheranda is laying emphasis on purification of the nadis prior to the practice of pranayama. He says that pranayama practices should not be undertaken without purification of the nadis.

Samanu nadi shuddhi in context

So we can understand that this particular practice is described for more advanced practitioners. Sage Gheranda has given instructions to practise samanu nadi shuddhi with counting of the bija mantra and with dharana, concentration. He has declared this to be the first stage of practice for a higher category of sadhaka. Not only is he assuming their proficiency in the advanced ratio of 1:4:2, but also they are to practise it with japa of the bija mantra while concentrating *chitta*, the inner mind, on the tattwa related to that bija mantra.

First, Sage Gheranda has instructed practitioners to focus the mind on the vayu mantra *Yam* ये which represents the air element and to visualise one's self in a form like bright smoke. This practice is similar to that in kundalini yoga where remembering the bija mantra of anahata chakra and visualizing anahata chakra in chidakasha has been given as a practice for higher category practitioners.

Secondly, he advises meditation on agni tattwa, the fire element. The symbol of agni tattwa is in manipura chakra. This second stage is again for higher category practitioners. It includes meditating on the light of fire while keeping in mind the bija mantra *Ram* रं of manipura chakra.

In the third stage, he says to visualize the moon at the nosetip while focusing the mind there. Inhale through the left nostril while repeating the bija mantra *Tham* ठं 16 times. Retain the breath, doing mental japa of the bija mantra *Vam* वं up to 64 times and through the medium of meditation one observes the pure soothing fluid or juice called amrita flowing out of the moon and purifying the nadis. Finally one returns to earth, exhaling through the right nostril while counting the bija mantra *Lam* लं 32 times.

With this, nadi shuddhi kriya, the process of purification of the nadis, is completed.

Verses 45–46

एवंविधां नाडी शुद्धिं कृत्वा नाडीं विशोधयेत् ।
 दृढोभूत्वाऽऽसनं कृत्वा प्राणायामं समाचरेत् ॥ 45 ॥
 सहितः सूर्यभेदश्च उज्जायी शीतली तथा ।
 भस्त्रिका भ्रामरी मूर्च्छा केवली चाष्टकुम्भकाः ॥ 46 ॥

*Evamvidhaam naadee shuddhim kritvaa naadeem vishodhayet;
 Dridhobhootvaa"sanam kritvaa praanaayaamam samaacharet. (45)*

*Sahitah sooryabhedashcha ujjayee sheetalee tathaa;
 Bhastrikaa bhraamaree moorchchhaa kevalee chaashta-
 kumbhakaah. (46)*

After purifying the nadis, sit in a steady asana (posture) and prepare for pranayama. There are eight types of pranayama: sahita, surya bheda, ujjayi, sheetali, bhastrika, bhramari, moorchha and kevali.

With the preparations for correct place, time, diet, self-restraint, knowledge and purification of the nadis all underway, the disciple is instructed to sit steadily. In discussing pranayama Sage Gheranda first lists eight distinct techniques.

I. SAHITA PRANAYAMA

Verse 47

सहितो द्विविधः प्रोक्तः सगर्भश्च निगर्भकः ।
सगर्भो बीजमुच्चार्य निगर्भो बीज वीजतः ॥ 47 ॥

*Sahito dvividhah proktah sagarbhashcha nigarbhakah;
Sagarbho beejamuchchaarya nigarbho beejā varjitah.*

Sahita pranayama is of two types: sagarbha and nigarbha. In sagarbha pranayama, bija mantra is used; nigarbha pranayama is practised without bija mantra.

Up to this stage Sage Gheranda has prepared for pranayama by covering nadi shuddhi, purification of the nadis, in various stages. Nadi shuddhi consists of nirmanu nadi shuddhi, through the physical practices of dhauti, and samanu nadi shuddhi, through psychic practices of visualization and mantra japa. Once proficiency in nadi shuddhi is achieved, Sage Gheranda begins explaining the practice of pranayama in a sequence.

First in the sequence is sahita pranayama. *Sahita pranayama* has two divisions: *sagarbha* pranayama, practised with mantra, and *nigarbha* pranayama, practised without mantra. Only after sahita pranayama can surya bheda be mastered. After surya bheda comes ujjayi, then sheetali, bhramari and

bhastrika. Moorchha and kevali have been considered as higher pranayamas and are described last.

Earlier Sage Gheranda said that pranayama gives a feeling of lightness in the body, and with this lightness there is a reduction in the gross body. But it should be understood that this reference to the aspect of lightness is not about transforming a fat body into a thin body. Rather, when pranas are awakened inside the body, this development of pranas creates a feeling of lightness. The light feeling is an effect of awakening the pranas. Now he gives a method for achieving this aim of pranayama.

SAGARBHA PRANAYAMA

Verses 48–53

प्राणायामं सगर्भं च प्रथमं कथयामि ते ।
सुखासनेचोपविश्य प्राङ्गमुखो वाऽप्युदङ्मुखः ।
रजोगुणं विधिं ध्यायेद्रक्तवर्णमिवर्णकम् ॥ 48 ॥
इडया पूरयेद्वायुं मात्रया षोडशैः सुधीः ।
पूरकान्ते कुम्भकाद्ये कर्तव्यस्तूङ्घ्रियानकः ॥ 49 ॥
सत्त्वमयं हरिं ध्यात्वा उकारं कृष्णवर्णकम् ।
चतुःषष्ट्या च मात्रया कुम्भकेनैव धारयेत् ॥ 50 ॥
तमोमयं शिवं ध्यात्वा मकारं शुक्लवर्णकम् ।
द्वात्रिंशन्मात्रया चैव रेचयेद्विधिना पुनः ॥ 51 ॥
पुनःपिङ्गलयाऽऽपूर्य कुम्भकेनैव धारयेत् ।
इडया रेचयेत्पश्चात् तद्वीजेन क्रमेण तु ॥ 52 ॥
अनुलोमविलोमेन वारंवारं च साधयेत् ।
पूरकान्ते कुम्भकान्तं धृतनासापुटद्वयम् ।
कनिष्ठानामिकाङ्गुष्ठैस्तर्जनी मध्यमे विना ॥ 53 ॥

*Praanaayaamam sagarbham cha prathamam kathayaami te;
Sukhaasanechopavishya praangamukho va'pyudanmukhah;
Rajogunam vidhim dhyaayedraktavarnamavarnakam. (48)*

*Idayaa poorayedvaayum maatrayaa shodashaih sudheeh;
Poorakaante kumbhakaadye kartavyastooddiyaanakah. (49)*

*Sattvamayam harim dhyaatvaa ukaaram krishnavarnakam;
Chatuhshashtyaa cha maatrasyaa kumbhakenaiva dhaarayet. (50)*

*Tamomayam shivam dhyaatvaa makaaram shuklavarnakam;
Dvaatrimshanmaatrasyaa chaiva rechayedvidhinaa punah. (51)*

*Punahpingalayaa"poorya kumbhakenaiva dhaarayet;
Idayaa rechayetpashchaat tadveejena kramena tu. (52)*

*Anulomavilomena vaaramvaaram cha saadhayet;
Poorakaante kumbhakaantam dhritanaasaaputadvayam;
Kanishthaanaamikaangushthaistarjane madhyame vinaa. (53)*

First I will tell you the technique of sagarbha pranayama. Sit in sukhasana, facing east or north and meditate on red-coloured Brahman, full of rajas guna. Inhale through the left nostril with japa of *A ॐ* bija mantra 16 times. After the end of the inhalation and before the beginning of kumbhaka, apply uddiyana bandha. Then retain the breath up to a count of 64 with japa of the *U ॐ* bija mantra and meditate on dark coloured Hari (Krishna), full of sattwa guna. Then exhale, repeating the bija mantra *M ॐ* 32 times while meditating on fair-complexioned Shiva, full of tamas guna. Then inhale through the right nostril, retain the breath and exhale through the left nostril repeating the bija mantras in the same manner as above, practising alternate nostril breathing again and again. After inhalation, until the end of kumbhaka, close both nostrils using the thumb and the little fingers; do not engage the index finger and middle finger.

Sukhasana here does not mean any particular physical position. Sage Gheranda has already described meditative asanas for pranayama and here he uses the word *sukhasana* to mean any comfortable asana in which one feels relaxed and calm, facing north or east.

Preparation

He recommends nasagra mudra for controlling the flow of the breath in the nostrils. After inhalation, one nostril is closed with the ring finger of the right hand and the other nostril with the thumb. The first two fingers (index and middle) are not used. This *mudra* or gesture is commonly used in pranayama and is described in all the yogic texts. A useful variation can be introduced. The fingers that are not used are bent inwards and placed on *bhrumadhya*, the eyebrow centre, helping the attention to always remain focused there.



I. Meditation on Brahma with inhalation

First meditate on Brahma. While focusing the awareness, try to see him as red in colour, which is the symbol of rajas guna. Then inhale through the left nostril, stimulating ida nadi with the mantra *A ॐ* repeated 16 times.

Maybe this description appears to be a little strange at this stage, but after the full description it will be understood why these symbols are used here. We are asked to meditate on Brahma, visualizing his symbolic colour as red and as full of rajasic qualities. Normally, human beings consider Brahma to be sattwic, but in reality Brahma does not represent sattwa; he is *rajo guni*, dynamic in quality, because his job is to create and the process of creation is not possible without rajas guna.

Also, in tantra it is said that *devis*, goddesses, adore red attire and dresses. Red cloth is a symbol of activity. The same thinking is expressed here by Sage Gheranda. The quality of that *kriya* or *shakti*, that activity, that is taking place in

the work of creation, is *rajas*. Its colour is red and its *matra* or sound is *A ॐ*. Understanding of the *A ॐ* mantra can be helped by studying the *Mandukya Upanishad*, because there it is linked with *vaishvanara*, the state of being awake. This awake state of consciousness is linked with whatever is seen or reflected in this external world; it is the externalized state. The process of creation associated with *Brahma* is a function of externalization, not of internalization. This is why *A ॐ* has been considered an indicator or symbolic word of *Brahma*.

2. Meditation on Hari with kumbhaka

After inhaling, the breath is retained using *nasagra mudra*, and *uddiyana bandha* is applied. While holding the breath, one should meditate on *Hari*, the omnipotent and omniscient *Ishwara*, and in that state of *kumbhaka*, repeat the *bija mantra U ॐ* 64 times. *Hari* is to be visualized as *Krishna varna*, black in colour.

Sage Gheranda says, *Poorakaante kumbhakaadye kartavya-stooddiyaanakah*, after inhalation, the breath is retained and *uddiyana bandha* is applied with internal breath retention. This is quite strange, because during internal retention the abdomen is full and at the same time it is being squeezed inwards. This is not easy, in fact it is a peculiar characteristic of *sagarbha pranayama*. Generally it is taught that if *antar kumbhaka*, internal breath retention, is performed during *pranayama*, then the only *bandhas* that should be applied are *moola bandha* and *jalandhara bandha*. It is only during *bahir kumbhaka*, external breath retention, that *uddiyana bandha* or *maha bandha* are performed, because with the breath out there is no pressure on the abdomen. But here the opposite is instructed. Why?

When *uddiyana bandha* is performed with the breath held in, it means the stomach is pulled in and pressure is particularly exerted on the chest cavity, which is called *urosthi*, the heart centre. Also, pressure is exerted in the upper part of the waist behind the navel, which is the

location of manipura. Manipura chakra is the centre of *agni tattwa*, the fire element, and the heart centre in the chest is the centre of *vayu tattwa*, the air element. These two chakras are considered very important in pranayama. The centre for the development, expansion and awakening of the pranas is manipura. Anahata chakra is the centre for air, which is the vehicle for the pranas to flow from manipura to other parts of the body. In order to make the air and fire elements strong, these two chakras or psychic centres are awakened. Hence this particular instruction for the practice of uddiyana bandha is given. Also note this refers more to Sage Gheranda's original description of a subtle uddiyana: as one hand is raised in nasagra mudra, there is no hunching of the shoulders.

Further, the sage considers Hari to be sattwic. But here is another strange thing – why is the colour black given as sattwic? *Sattva-mayam harim dhyaatvaa ukaaram Krishna-varnakam*, usually white is considered to be sattwic. Why is the colour or complexion of Hari black when he is full of sattwic or spiritual qualities?

Black is the colour of the unseen and formless nature. In nature, whatever is manifested has the qualities of rajo guna and tamo guna. But the colour of unmanifest nature is also black, where everything is concentrated in the root state, and this is the sattwic state, which is called *prakasha sheelatva* or the nature of light. In that unmanifest state everything is present in seed form only and no rajasic or tamasic activities take place, so this shoonya state is the sattwic state. It can be inferred that Sage Gheranda is drawing on a tantric principle here, as it is neither a vedic nor a yogic principle.

3. Meditation on Shiva with exhalation

After this, one has to meditate on Shiva while exhaling. His colour or complexion is fair and he is full of tamasic qualities. The sound or the symbolic syllable which indicates him is the bija mantra *M ॠ*. While counting this mantra 32 times, one exhales through pingala nadi.

Shiva is known in the form of a destroyer. Here again, there is a strangeness in the description of the characteristics. *Tamo-mayam shivam dhyaatvaa makaaram shukla-varnakam.* It is said here that he is full of tamasic qualities, yet his complexion is fair. This is because here the tamasic quality means a process or change. In the presence of light, form, colour, matter, etc., can be seen. Here, in the state of light, the knowledge of diversity is being perceived and this knowledge of diversity, knowledge of many, is the form of tamas. Therefore, Shiva has been called tamasic.

If a form is observed, then a change takes place in it. If colour is observed, it also keeps on changing. Everything can be seen if there is light; vision has no limit, but if there is no light, nothing can be seen. There is limitation in darkness; everything merges into one colour, but in the light all things are clearly seen. Therefore, Sage Gheranda has considered light as a changing force, full of tamasic qualities.

Shiva is seen as the container of the sattwic and rajasic qualities, the reason being that he is the catalyst for the conversion of tamas into sattwa and in the early stages, when the tamasic qualities are being modified before the attainment of sattwa, the tamasic are highlighted. However, this tamas should not be construed as negative, rather it is the conditioned being modified into unconditioned.

Aum

To complete the round, the next inhalation is performed through the right nostril, kumbhaka is practised, and exhalation is through the left nostril. The sequence of bija mantras remains the same. There should be no change in the ratio. In this way the practice is to be done through alternate nostrils respectively until perfection is achieved.

This practice appears similar to the practice of samanu nadi shuddhi. The main difference is that in samanu nadi shuddhi one practises to purify the nadis and meditates

on the bija mantras of the *tattwas*, elements of creation: earth, water, fire, air and space. In *sagarbha pranayama* one meditates on the *gunas* which make up the manifest nature, and also on the trinity of divine powers with the *bija* mantras: *A अ U उ M म्* (*AUM ॐ*) which span the manifest and the unmanifest.

NIGARBHA PRANAYAMA

Verses 54–56

प्राणायामो निगर्भस्तु विना बीजेन जायते ।
वामजानूपरिन्यस्तं वामपाणितलं भ्रमेत् ।
एकादिशतपर्यन्तं पूरकुम्भकरेचकम् ॥ 54 ॥
उत्तमा विंशतिमात्रा मध्यमा षोडशी स्मृता ।
अधमा द्वादशी मात्रा प्राणायामास्त्रिधा स्मृताः ॥ 55 ॥
अधमाज्जायते घर्मो मेरुकम्पश्च मध्यमात् ।
उत्तमाच्च भूमित्यागस्त्रिविधं सिद्धिलक्षणम् ॥ 56 ॥

*Praanaayaamo nigarbhastu vinaa beejena jaayate;
Vaamajaanooparinyastam vaamapaanitalam bhramet;
Ekaadishataparyantam poorakumbhakarechakam. (54)*

*Uttamaa vimshatirmaatraa madhyamaa shodashee smritaa;
Adhamaa dvaadashee maatraa praanaayaamaastridhaa smritaah. (55)*

*Adhamaajjaayate gharma merukampashcha madhyamaat;
Uttamaachcha bhoomityaagastriavidham siddhilakshanam. (56)*

Nigarbha pranayama is practised without *bija* mantras; the left hand moves on the left knee (to keep count) of the *pranayama* consisting of inhalation, retention and exhalation from 1 to 100. The highest *pranayama* has 20 counts, the medium 16 and the lowest 12. Thus *pranayama* has three wings. The lowest gives birth to heat or perspiration; through the middle count trembling of the body (especially the spine) is achieved, and by the highest, the practitioner is lifted up from the earth and

travels in space. These three (experiences) should all be considered as symptoms of mastery.

Here, *nigarbha pranayama* has been divided into three categories: *uttama*, the highest or advanced, *madhyama*, the medium or intermediate, and *adhama*, the lowest or beginners. In this pranayama neither the support of the bija mantra nor tattwa dharana is used. Only counting of numbers is done.

In *uttama nigarbha pranayama*, the basic count is 20. That means breathing in while counting to 20, retaining the breath while counting to 80, and breathing out while counting to 40. In *madhyama nigarbha*, the basic count is 16, which means a count of 16, 64 and 32 should be maintained on inhalation, retention and exhalation respectively. In *adhama nigarbha*, the basic count is 12, the ratio remains the same at 1:4:2 giving a count of 12:48:24.

Different symptoms are observed, which indicate that a particular stage has been perfected. If the body starts to sweat during *adhama nigarbha pranayama*, this indicates that the ratio 12:48:24 has been perfected and awakening of the pranas is commencing.

The symptom of perfecting *madhyama nigarbha* is the sensation of vibrations in the spinal cord. Vibrations in the spine take place for two reasons: firstly, when the pranas are awakened in the chakras and secondly, when kundalini is awakened and starts ascending in the upper chakras. With perfection of the count 16:64:32, the state of *prana-utthana*, pranic awakening, has come, after which the body is ready for the awakening of the kundalini.

A person who inhales up to a count of 20, holds the internal retention up to a count of 80 and exhales to a count of 40 must be able to exercise self-control over the breath, physical and internal uneasiness, mental anxiety and the state of the brain. On perfection of *uttama pranayama*, mastery over inhalation, retention and exhalation in the ratio of 20:80:40, *bhoomi tyaga* is achieved, meaning the pranas are expanded, and in that state prana shakti awakens, making

the body light so it becomes capable of leaving or rising above the earth.

Verse 57

प्राणायामात्खेचरत्वं प्राणायामाद्रुजां हतिः ।
प्राणायामाच्छक्तिबोधः प्राणायामान्मनोन्मनी ।
आनन्दो जायते चित्ते प्राणायामी सुखी भवेत् ॥ 57 ॥

*Praanaayaamaatkhecharatvam praanaayaamaadrujaam hatih;
Praanaayaamaachchaktibodhah praanaayaamaanmanonmanee;
Aanando jaayate chitte praanaayaamee sukhee bhavet.*

Through the practice of pranayama, travel in space, elimination of diseases and awakening of kundalini is achieved. Bliss manifests in the mind through pranayama and one becomes happy.

In this verse Sage Gheranda has described the benefits of pranayama. The practice of pranayama is full of boons. The capacity to travel in space is attained. It provides bliss and alleviates every type of disease. It enhances the capacity for higher knowledge and inner vision. Through pranayama all types of physical, mental and spiritual benefits can be achieved. Both the subtle and gross bodies benefit.

2. SURYA BHEDA PRANAYAMA (sun-piercing pranayama)

Verses 58–69

कथितं सहितं कुम्भं सूर्यभेदनकं शृणु ।
पूरयेत् सूर्यनाड्या च यथाशक्ति बहिर्मरुत् ॥ 58 ॥
धारयेद्बहुयत्नेन कुम्भकेन जलन्धरैः ।
यावत्स्वेदं नखकेशाभ्यां तावत्कुर्वन्तु कुम्भकम् ॥ 59 ॥
प्राणोऽपानः समानश्चोदानव्यानौ तथैव च ।
नागः कूर्मश्च कृकरो देवदत्तो धनञ्जयः ॥ 60 ॥
हृदि प्राणो वह्निन्नित्यमपानो गुदमण्डले ।
समानो नाभिदेशे तु उदानः कण्ठमध्यगः ॥ 61 ॥
व्यानो व्याप्य शरीरे तु प्रधानाः पञ्च वायवः ।
प्राणाद्याः पञ्च विख्याता नागाद्याः पञ्चवायवः ॥ 62 ॥
तेषामपि च पञ्चानां स्थानानि च वदाम्यहम् ।
उद्गारे नाग आख्यातः कूर्मस्तून्मीलने स्मृतः ॥ 63 ॥
कृकरः क्षुत्कृते ज्ञेयो देवदत्तो विजृम्भणे ।
न जहाति मृते क्वापि सर्वव्यापी धनञ्जयः ॥ 64 ॥
नागो गृह्णाति चैतन्यं कूर्मश्चैव निमेषणम् ।
क्षुत्तृषं कृकरश्चैव चतुर्थेन तु जृम्भणम् ॥ 65 ॥
भवेद्धनञ्जयाच्छब्दं क्षणमात्रं न निःसरेत् ॥ 66 ॥
सर्वे तु सूर्यसम्भिन्ना नाभिमूलात्समुद्भवेत् ।
इडया रेचयेत्पश्चाद्द्वैर्येणाखण्डवेगतः ॥ 67 ॥
पुनः सूर्येण चाकृष्य कुम्भयित्वा यथाविधि ।
रेचयित्वा साधयेत्तु क्रमेण च पुनः पुनः ॥ 68 ॥
कुम्भकः सूर्यभेदस्तु जरामृत्युविनाशकः ।
बोधयेत्कुण्डलीं शक्तिं देहानलविवर्धनम् ।
इति ते कथितं चण्डं सूर्यभेदनमुत्तमम् ॥ 69 ॥

*Kathitam sahitam kumbham sooryabhedanakam shrinu;
Poorayet sooryanaadyaa cha yathaashakti bahirmarut. (58)*

*Dhaarayedbahuyatnena kumbhakena jalandharaih;
Yaavatsvedam nakhakeshaabhyaam taavatkurvantu kumbhakam. (59)*

*Praano'paanah samaanashchodaanavyaanau tathaiva cha;
Naagah koormashcha krikaro devadatto dhananjayah. (60)*

*Hridi praano vahennityamapaano gudamandale;
Samaano naabhideshe tu udaanah kanthamadhyagah. (61)*

*Vyaano vyaapya shareere tu pradhaanaah pancha vaayavah;
Praanaadyaah pancha vikhyaataa naagaadyaah panchavaayavah. (62)*

*Teshaamapi cha panchaanaam sthaanaana cha vadaamyaham;
Udgaare naaga aakhyaatah koormastoonmeelane smritah. (63)*

*Krikarah kshutkrite jneyo devadatto vijrimbhane;
Na jahaati mrite kvaapi sarvavyaapee dhananjayah. (64)*

*Naago grihnaati chaitanyam koormashchaiva nimeshanam;
Kshuttrisham krikarashchaiva chaturthena tu jrimbhanam. (65)*

Bhavedddhananjayaachchhabdam kshanamaatram na nihsaret. (66)

*Sarve tu sooryasambhinnaa naabhimoolaatsamuddharet;
Idayaa rechayetpashchaaddhairyenaakhandavegatah. (67)*

*Punah sooryena chaakrishya kumbhayitvaa yathaavidhi;
Rechayitvaa saadhayettu kramena cha punah punah. (68)*

*Kumbhakah sooryabhedastu jaraamrityuvinaashakah;
Bodhayetkundaleem shaktim dehaanalavivardhanam;
Iti te kathitam chandam sooryabhedanamuttamam. (69)*

Sahita kumbhaka has been described, now listen to surya bheda. First, breathe in deeply through surya nadi according to capacity, retain the breath with jalandhara bandha until the whole body, from the nails to the hair on the head, begins to sweat.

Prana, apana, samana, vyana, udana, naga, koorma, krikara, devadatta and dhananjaya are the ten prana vayus. Prana is in the heart, apana is in the anus, samana is in the navel, udana is in the throat, and vyana is in the whole entire body; these are the five main pranas. Naga, etc., are the five sub-prana vayus. Naga (manifests) in belching, koorma in opening of the eyes, krikara in hunger, devadatta in yawning, and the one which does not leave the body even on death is called dhananjaya.

From naga comes consciousness, from koorma comes blinking, from krikara comes thirst and hunger, from devadatta comes yawning and from dhananjaya, which never leaves, comes the voice.

At the time of practice, separating these prana vayus, raise samana vayu, which comes from the root of the navel, with the help of the surya nadi and then slowly exhale through the left nostril. Again inhale through the right nostril, hold the breath as per the technique and exhale through the left nostril. This process should be repeated time and again. This very process is called surya bheda. This pranayama, surya bheda, is the destroyer of old age and death. It awakens kundalini and the fire inside the body is activated. O Chanda, I have narrated to you the best pranayama known as surya bheda.

Before describing the technique of surya bheda pranayama, Sage Gheranda explains that there are ten types of *prana vayus*, energies or winds, in the human body: prana, apana, samana, udana, vyana, naga, koorma, krikara, devadatta and dhananjaya. These ten are the medium through which all the activities of the body occur.

It needs to be understood that in everyday language prana usually means *mahaprana*, the great or cosmic energy. Prana is also one of the *pancha pranas*, the five energies governing the body: prana, apana, udana, samana and vyana. Besides these, there are five *upa-pranas*, sub-pranas, in the body: naga, koorma, krikara, devadatta and dhananjaya. The main pranas, the pancha vayu, are:

1. *Hridi praano vahennityam*, the location of the first of the pancha pranas, known as 'prana', is in the heart region.
2. *Apaanogudamandale*, apana is located in the anal region.
3. *Samaanaabhideshetu*, samana is in the navel region.
4. *Udaanakanthamadhyatah*, udana is located in the throat region. However, the throat region here actually means the extremities of the body, including the whole of the head from the throat to brahmarandhra and the limbs.

5. *Vyaano vyaapya shareere* vyana exists in the whole body.

The five upa-pranas perform varying functions:

1. *Udgaara naga aakhyaatah*, naga vayu functions during the belching process.
2. *Koormastoonmeelane smritah*, blinking or twinkling of the eyes is performed through the medium of koorma vayu.
3. *Krikarah kshutkrite jneyo*, sneezing is performed by krikara vayu.
4. *Devadatto vijrimbhane*, yawning is achieved by devadatta.
5. *Na jahaatimritekvaapi sarvavyaapee dhananajayah*, dhanana-jaya vayu remains present even after death while some internal heat remains.

The activities of these sub-pranas actually appear to be independent activities, but there is also a controller or director of these activities in the body. Blinking the eyes is not completely controlled but it is the function of the brain to automatically know when the eyelids need to be shut, such as when there is tension in the eyes and the eye muscles need to relax.

According to yogic philosophy, behind every physical activity a shakti or power serves as its medium. That shakti is called *uddipan*, the exciting force or stimulation, on the physical level. Whether it is called *preraka uddipan*, motor stimulation, or *sanvedi uddipan*, sensory stimulation, the sensation or the message in the form of uddipan travels from one place to another and it has a reaction. There is a force working behind this action-reaction process. These forces, which are related to the body and conduct involuntary activities of the body, have been observed in the form of sub-pranas in yoga.

Bear in mind that each sub-prana has a relationship with a prana. For example naga has a relationship with samana. The process of blinking the eyes, which is performed by koorma vayu, is related to udana, and the process of sneezing, krikara, is related with prana.

In some countries it is believed, and also mentioned in their texts, that when a person sneezes, the soul momentarily leaves the body and a devil enters. When someone sneezes,

if another person is present, they will say 'bless you'. In India, when children sneeze they say *shatam jeeva*, 'live for a hundred years'. It is a tradition. It is difficult to say what secrets lie behind these customs. Maybe these beliefs come from a sense that at the very moment when prana vayu is leaving the body, a constructive thought must be put in. If this idea is correct, it shows a folk knowledge that this activity is linked with prana.

In the yawning process, the activity of devadatta is involved. Devadatta is linked with apana vayu. When one yawns, air is sucked in through the mouth, making a sound like 'aaa'. This action of sucking air in and taking it down brings the force or shakti down low into the body and is related to apana vayu.

It is said that after death the pranas leave the body, but the warmth of the body does not die down immediately. It takes time for the body to become hard and stiff. The inner energy or body temperature is related to vyana and the sub-vayu related to vyana is dhananjaya. It is said that even after death, dhananjaya remains in the body for a time and is the last prana to leave the body. Dhananjaya controls speech.

Sage Gheranda's technique

After explaining the prana vayas in this way, Sage Gheranda discusses surya bheda pranayama. For the practice of surya bheda pranayama, inhale through surya nadi, i.e. through the right nostril, and after inhalation retain the breath. This antar kumbhaka should be practised along with jalandhara bandha for as long as possible according to one's capacity, until the body starts perspiring. While inhaling, experience the rising of the air and energy from the navel region upwards. Then release jalandhara bandha, the kumbhaka, and slowly exhale through the left nostril. After exhalation, once more inhale through the right nostril, practise kumbhaka and jalandhara bandha, then slowly exhale in the same way as before. This process should be repeated several times.

It is difficult to say what the principle is behind inhalation through the right nostril and exhalation through the left. It may be to moderate the practice, especially as Sage Gheranda is instructing his disciple to practise surya bheda using the ratio 1:4:2 and with a count of at least 12. The technique taught today uses only the right nostril as follows.

Technique

Assume a comfortable meditation asana with the head and spine straight. Place the hands on the knees in either chin or jnana mudra. Close the eyes and relax the whole body. When the body is comfortable, still and relaxed, watch the breath for a few minutes until it spontaneously becomes slow and deep.

Then practise nasagra mudra, placing the index and middle fingers of the right hand on the eyebrow centre. Place the thumb over the right nostril and the ring finger over the left nostril. The first and second fingers always remain on the eyebrow centre.

Stage 1: Close the left nostril with the ring finger and inhale slowly and deeply through the right nostril, counting the breath so that it is measured. Exhale slowly through the right nostril for the same count. This is one round.

Do not strain to reach the counts recommended by Sage Gheranda if practising for the first time. Find a comfortable count and equalize the inhalation and exhalation. Practise until a count of 12:12 comes naturally. After some weeks or months try the next stage.

Stage 2: Close the left nostril with the ring finger and inhale slowly and deeply through the right nostril, counting the breath so that it is measured. At the end of the inhalation, close both nostrils, retain the breath and perform jalandhara and moola bandhas. Maintain for just a few seconds when practising this pranayama for the first time, then release moola bandha and then jalandhara bandha. Bring the head upright and exhale

slowly through the right nostril only. This is one round. Build up to the ratio of 1:1:1 once the basic technique is clear. Do not strain.

Stage 3: Once the ratio of 1:1:1 is comfortable, build up the count. Do not strain. Slowly increase the length of retention over a matter of months. Once a comfortable count of 12:12:12 is achieved, the ratio may be increased to 1:2:2 and later to 1:3:2 on attaining perfection.

Advanced variation: Once the basic technique is clear, introduce the ratio of inhalation, retention and exhalation as 1:4:2.

Duration: When first practising surya bheda pranayama, 10 rounds are sufficient. Over time, however, as the practice becomes comfortable and easy, the duration may be increased to 10 to 15 minutes. Slowly increase the length of the count and the ratio of retention over a matter of months. A ratio of 1:1:1 may be introduced, which may then be increased to 1:2:2, 1:3:2 and later to 1:4:2 on attaining perfection.

Precautions: Never practise surya bheda pranayama after eating as it will interfere with the natural flow of energy associated with digestion. This pranayama may cause imbalance in the breathing cycle if performed for more than 30 minutes. Practise jalandhara and moola bandhas separately for some weeks or months before combining them in this pranayama practice. Surya bheda is a very powerful pranayama and should only be performed under expert guidance.

Contra-indications: Do not practise when suffering from external heat, boils, fever or constipation. People suffering from heart disease, hypertension, hyperthyroid, peptic ulcer, anxiety, anger or epilepsy should not practise this pranayama.

Benefits: Addressing the king, Sage Gheranda draws his attention to this pranayama by saying it keeps old age and death away. It awakens kundalini shakti. It activates agni (fire or temperature) in the body. It has been

observed that practising this pranayama can cause the body to overheat. This can be experienced as a benefit by practising it during winter, and it is also very useful for externalizing the consciousness in people who are depressed or introverted.

Yogis and yogic scientists believe that the right nostril is connected with the sympathetic nervous system. When an activity is performed time and again with the right nostril, the sympathetic activity and rate of metabolism in the body are enhanced, causing changes to take place in the body.

This practice counteracts imbalances of the vata dosha or wind element. It stimulates and awakens the pranic energy by activating pingala nadi and increasing extroversion and dynamism, enabling physical activities to be performed more effectively and efficiently. It is especially recommended for those who are dull and lethargic or who find it difficult to communicate with the external world. It makes the mind more alert and perceptive and it is an excellent pre-meditation pranayama. It is also useful in the treatment of low blood pressure, infertility and worms.

Chandra bheda (moon-piercing pranayama)

These days, another pranayama is sometimes practised, although it has not been described here by the sage. This is *chandra bheda*, which activates the introverting ida nadi related to the moon's energy. Its technique is similar to surya bheda. The only difference is that this practice is done with the left nostril instead of the right. It has been observed that if hyperactive people are made to practise chandra bheda pranayama, they become calm and quiet and their over-excitement subsides. Generally, however, chandra bheda is not recommended as people may become too introverted and even depressed.

3. UJJAYI PRANAYAMA (psychic breath)

Verses 70–73

नासाभ्यां वायुमाकृष्य मुखमध्ये च धारयेत् ।
हृद्गलाभ्यां समाकृष्य वायुं वक्त्रे च धारयेत् ॥ 70 ॥
मुखं प्रक्षाल्य सम्वन्द्य कुर्याज्जालन्धरं ततः ।
आशक्तिं कुम्भकं कृत्वा धारयेदविरोधतः ॥ 71 ॥
उज्जायी कुम्भकं कृत्वा सर्वकार्याणि साधयेत् ।
न भवेत्कफरोगश्च क्रूरवायुरजीर्णकम् ॥ 72 ॥
आमवातः क्षयः कासो ज्वरः प्लीहा न विद्यते ।
जरामृत्युविनाशाय चोज्जारी साधयेन्नरः ॥ 73 ॥

*Naasaabhyaam vaayumaakrishya mukhamadhye cha dhaarayet;
Hridgalaabhyaam samaakrishya vaayum vaktre cha dhaarayet. (70)*

*Mukham prakshaalya samvandya kuryaajjaalandharam tatah;
Aashakti kumbhakam kritvaa dhaarayedavirodhatah. (71)*

*Ujjaayee kumbhakam kritvaa sarvakaaryaanisaadhayet;
Na bhavetkapharogashcha krooravaayurajeernakam. (72)*

*Aamavaatah kshayah kaaso jvarah pleehaa na vidyate;
Jaramrityuvinaashaaya chojjaayeem saadhayennarah. (73)*

Inhaling external air through both the nostrils, suck the internal air through the heart and throat and hold it by means of kumbhaka. Then emptying the mouth, apply jalandhara bandha, hold the breath to capacity in a manner which does not cause any obstruction. This is called ujjayi kumbhaka. With it all works are perfected. Diseases from kapha imbalances, nervous and digestive disorders do not manifest. Diseases like ama vata, tuberculosis, respiratory disorders, fever and spleen-related disorders are cured. If ujjayi kumbhaka is perfected, old age and death are also managed.

Generally this ujjayi technique is combined with various other practices. For example, often ujjayi breathing is used in

the practice of nadi shodhana, not as a separate pranayama, but its practice can be carried out separately. Also, the throat does not become dry if the tongue is rolled up and placed at the root of the palate in khechari mudra. For this reason, in other yoga texts, the practice of khechari mudra is combined with ujjayi pranayama. Yogis believe that with this combined practice of ujjayi and khechari mudra, the practice of ajapa japa is perfected.

Technique

Describing the technique of ujjayi pranayama, Sage Gheranda says that inhaling through both nostrils, the breath is to be taken in deeply and the air is to be sucked through the heart and throat. The question arises as to how the air is to be sucked through the heart and throat when breathing in through the nostrils.

The explanation is that the process of contracting the throat and producing a subtle sound while inhaling is described by the sage as breathing through the heart and throat. He could have directly written it like this, *kantha sankochanam kritvaa*: breathe in deeply, contracting the throat, but he did not. He may have described it in this way in order to explain the technique of contraction properly and to emphasize the suction power of this ujjayi breath.

When the throat is contracted, the windpipe narrows and when air enters through that restricted passage, the gentle snoring sound of a child is produced. If this is practised correctly, the abdomen simultaneously contracts. This happens by itself, without any effort. The breathing sound should not be too loud. It should only be heard by the practitioner, not by others.

In this way, for a complete ujjayi breath, after inhalation, internal breath retention and jalandhara bandha are practised. Then, producing a similar sound, the breath is slowly let out by exhalation. This description makes it absolutely clear that ujjayi is a process of breathing deeply.

Duration: Practise for 10 to 20 minutes.

Contra-indications: People who are too introverted by nature should not perform this practice. Those suffering from heart disease should not combine bandhas or breath retention with ujjayi.

Benefits: Ujjayi is classified as a tranquillizing pranayama and it also has a heating effect on the body. This practice is used in yoga therapy to soothe the nervous system and calm the mind. It has a profoundly relaxing effect at the psychic level. It helps to relieve insomnia and may be practised in shavasana just before sleeping. The basic form without breath retention or bandhas slows down the heart rate and is useful for people suffering from high blood pressure. It removes disorders of the *dhatu*, which are the seven constituents of the body: blood, bone, marrow, fat, semen, skin and flesh. With the practice of ujjayi, the practitioner does not suffer from kapha disorders, constipation, dysentery, intestinal ulcers, colds, fever and liver problems. Fear of death and old age disappears. Generally it has been observed that ujjayi is particularly useful in the practice of pratyahara.

Practice note: Ujjayi may be performed in any position, standing, sitting or lying. Those suffering from slipped disc or vertebral spondylitis may practise ujjayi in vajrasana or makarasana. Many people contort their facial muscles while doing ujjayi. It is unnecessary. Try to relax the face as much as possible.

4. SHEETALI PRANAYAMA (cooling pranayama)

Verses 74–75

जिह्वया वायुमाकृष्य चोदरे पूरयेच्छनैः ।
क्षणं च कुम्भकं कृत्वा नासाभ्यां रेचयेत्पुनः ॥ 74 ॥
सर्वदा साधयेद्योगी शीतलीकुम्भकं शुभम् ।
अजीर्णं कफपित्तं च नैव तस्य प्रजायते ॥ 75 ॥

*Jihvayaa vaayumaakrishya chodare poorayechchhanaih;
Kshanam cha kumbhakam kritvaa naasaabhyaam rechayetpunah. (74)*

*Sarvadaa saadhayedयोगी sheetaleekumbhakam shubham;
Ajeernam kaphapittam cha naiva tasya prajaayate. (75)*

Fill the abdomen by sucking air through the tongue. Retain the air for a short while with the help of kumbhaka and expel it through both nostrils. This beneficial sheetali pranayama should always be practised. By practising it, digestive disorders and kapha-pitta disorders do not manifest.

Technique

The tongue should be extended outside the mouth as far as possible, and the sides rolled up so that it forms a tube. The breath is inhaled deeply through this tube, so that the abdomen fills with air. Kumbhaka should be practised for a few moments only.

Sage Gheranda's instructions are not to practise kumbhaka (breath retention) for as long as possible. Rather there should be an interval of just a moment between inhalation and exhalation. During that momentary breath retention, the tongue is pulled in, the mouth



is closed and the breath is expelled through the nose. This makes one round.

Benefits: The sage says it is a simple practice yet extremely useful, because if yogis always practise it, digestive diseases and disorders of kapha and pitta do not take place.

Sheetali affects important brain centres associated with biological drives and temperature regulation. It reduces body heat and also cools the mind. It reduces blood pressure, acidity in the stomach, and mental and emotional excitation, and encourages the free flow of prana throughout the body. It induces muscular relaxation, mental tranquillity and may be used as a tranquillizer before sleep.

Sheetali gives control over hunger and excessive sweating and thirst during hot weather, and generates a feeling of satisfaction. A person who masters sheetali pranayama experiences a reduction in thirst and remains cool even in the hottest environment. The metabolic rate is reduced. Physical tiredness due to excessive labour does not last long, and a state of inner tranquillity is maintained for longer periods.

5. BHASTRIKA PRANAYAMA (bellows pranayama)

Verses 76–78

भस्त्रिका लोहकाराणां यथाक्रमेण सम्भ्रमेत् ।
तथा वायुं च नासाभ्यामुभाभ्यां चालयेच्छनैः ॥ 76 ॥
एवं विंशतिवारं च कृत्वा कुर्याच्च कुम्भकम् ।
तदन्ते चालयेद्वायुं पूर्वोक्तं च यथाविधि ॥ 77 ॥
त्रिवारं साधयेदेनं भस्त्रिकाकुम्भकं सुधीः ।
न च रोगो न च क्लेश आरोग्यं च दिने दिने ॥ 78 ॥

*Bhastrikaa lohakaaraanaam yathaakramena sambhramet;
Tathaa vaayum cha naasaabhyaamubhaabhyaam chaalaye-
chchhanaih. (76)*

*Evam vinshativaaram cha kritvaa kuryaachcha kumbhakam;
Tadante chaalayedvaayum poorvoktam cha yathaavidhi. (78)*

*Trivaaram saadhayedenam bhastrikaakumbhakam sudheeh;
Na cha rogo na cha klesha aarogyam cha dine dine. (78)*

Breathe in and out forcefully through both nostrils, filling and emptying the abdomen like the bellows of a blacksmith. Repeat this 20 times then hold the breath. The learned ones have named it bhasrika kumbhaka. It should be repeated thus thrice. By practising it, no disease or disorder takes place and a disease-free state is increased day by day.

Technique

In this pranayama, inhalation and exhalation is repeatedly performed at the same ratio, like the bellows of a blacksmith. Here, Sage Gheranda only gives instructions for breathing through both nostrils 20 times and then exhaling and practising kumbhaka. This process of rhythmic breathing in and out of the nose is performed quickly.

It is not instructed here to practise with one nostril, but in the next stage of the practice it is taught that the

breath is forcibly taken in through the left nostril and released quickly 20 times. After this, with the 21st breath drawn in, kumbhaka is performed. The same sequence is followed using the right nostril and then through both nostrils together, making one round, maintaining kumbhaka for as long as possible without straining.

When learning bhastrika, the technique has to be first perfected with internal retention. When the breath cannot be retained internally any longer, it is slowly released through the same nostril. In other texts the use of both jalandhara bandha and moola bandha together has been prescribed to further strengthen the practice.

Duration: Up to five rounds should be practised. Experienced practitioners may practise bhastrika pranayama three times a day.

Sequence and time of practice: The best time for bhastrika pranayama is after asana practice and just before meditation. It creates an alert yet tranquil mental state. Bhastrika should never be practised after meals.

Awareness: Focus the awareness on the breathing process, the physical movement of the abdomen and the mental counting.

Precautions: Bhastrika is a dynamic practice which consumes maximum physical energy. Beginners, not used to using the abdominal muscles correctly, are advised to take a few normal breaths, and a short rest after each round. A feeling of faintness, excessive perspiration or a nauseous sensation indicates that the practice is being performed incorrectly. Avoid violent respiration, as the speed of the breath should be controlled. Avoid facial contortions and excessive shaking of the body. If any of these symptoms are experienced, the advice of a yoga teacher should be sought. A slow, conscientious approach is recommended.

Contra-indications: Bhastrika should not be practised by people who suffer from high blood pressure, heart disease, hernia, gastric ulcer, stroke, epilepsy, retinal problems, glaucoma or vertigo. Those suffering from

lung diseases such as asthma and chronic bronchitis, those recovering from tuberculosis, or in the first trimester of pregnancy are recommended to practise only under expert guidance.

Benefits: The majority of people do not breathe properly. Shallow and incomplete breathing does not fully exercise the lungs, especially the air sacs in the lower portion of the lungs, resulting in the formation of kapha, which contributes to disease. When these air sacs remain closed permanently, there is an insufficient supply of oxygen to the blood. In healthy breathing there is a proper exchange of oxygen and carbon dioxide in the open portion of the lungs, but in the portions that are under-utilized or obstructed this is not possible, resulting in a lack of oxygen in the body tissues and a feeling of weakness. Bhastrika opens up the closed air sacs and expels the germs, excess mucus and impure air from the lungs. Cleaning and rejuvenation of all the air sacs from top to bottom strengthens the lungs. The rapid exchange of oxygen and carbon dioxide into and out of the bloodstream stimulates the metabolic rate, producing heat and flushing out wastes and toxins. The rapid and rhythmic movement of the diaphragm also massages and stimulates the visceral organs, toning the digestive system.

Many people do not make use of the abdomen while breathing or do not know about its use. Bhastrika is a good practice to completely train the entire nadi system, so that the abdominal muscles are used during the normal breathing process throughout the day. Deep and full breathing is promoted so that maximum oxygen is received with fewer breaths. The level of carbon dioxide in the lungs is reduced. The increased intake of nutritious oxygen is achieved by expending very little energy, which helps to attain and maintain good health. Bhastrika is a useful practice for pregnant women during labour, after a few months of preparation.

This practice burns up toxins and removes diseases of the doshas or humours: *kapha* (phlegm), *pitta* (bile) and *vata* (wind). It alleviates inflammation in the throat and any accumulated phlegm. It is recommended for asthmatics and those suffering from other lung disorders. This practice purifies the blood, and is helpful for skin diseases and healing wounds, boils, etc.

Bhastrika activates the brain and induces clarity of thought and concentration. It increases vitality and lowers levels of stress and anxiety by raising the energy and harmonizing the pranas. Pranic blockages are cleared, causing sushumna nadi to flow, which leads to deep states of meditation and spiritual awakening. It balances and strengthens the nervous system, inducing peace, tranquillity and one-pointedness of mind in preparation for meditation.

Practice note: Both nostrils must be clear and flowing freely. Mucus blockages may be removed by practising neti.

6. BHRAMARI PRANAYAMA (humming bee pranayama)

Verses 79–84

अर्धरात्रे गते योगी जन्तूनां शब्दवर्जिते ।
कर्णौ पिधाय हस्ताभ्यां कुर्यात्पूरककुम्भकम् ॥ 79 ॥
शृणुयाद्दक्षिणे कर्णे नादमन्तर्गतं शुभम् ।
प्रथमं झिल्लिकानादं वंशीनादं ततः परम् ॥ 80 ॥
मेघझर्झरभ्रमरी घण्टा कास्यं ततः परम् ।
तुरीभेरीमृदङ्गादिनिनादानेकदुन्दुभिः ॥ 81 ॥
एवं नानाविधो नादो जायते नित्यमभ्यसात् ।
अनाहतस्य शब्दस्य तस्य शब्दस्य यो ध्वनिः ॥ 82 ॥
ध्वनेरन्तर्गतं ज्योतिर्ज्योतिरन्तर्गतं मनः ।
तन्मनो विलयं याति तद्विष्णोः परमं पदम् ।
एवं भ्रामरीसंसिद्धिः समाधिसिद्धिमाप्नुयात् ॥ 83 ॥
जपादष्ट गुणं ध्यानं ध्यानादष्टगुणं तपः ।
तपसोऽष्टगुणं गानं गानात्परतरं नहि ॥ 84 ॥

*Ardharaatre gate yogee jantoonaam shabdavarjite;
Karnau pidhaaya hastaabhyaam kuryaatpoorakakumbhakam. (79)*

*Shrinuyaaddakshine karne naadamantargatam shubham;
Prathamam jhillikaanaadam vamsheenaadam tatah param. (80)*

*Meghajharjharabhramaree ghantaa kaasyam tatah param;
Tureebhereemridangaadininaadaanekadundubhih. (81)*

*Evam naanaavidho naado jaayate nityamabhyaasaat;
Anaahatasya shabdasya tasya shabdasya yo dhvanih. (82)*

*Dhvanerantargatam jyotirjyotirantargatam manah;
Tanmano vilayam yaati tadvishnoh paramam padam;
Evam bhraamareesamsiddhih samaadhisiddhimaapnuyaat. (83)*

*Japaadashta gunam dhyaanam dhyaanaadashtagunam tapah;
Tapaso'shtagunam gaanam gaanaatparataram nahi. (84)*

After midnight, in a quiet place where no sound of any living being is heard, a yogi should practise inhalation and breath retention while closing the ears with the hands. One listens to internal sounds with the right ear. First the sound of a grasshopper, then the sound of a flute, then the thundering of clouds, then the sound of a cymbal or small drum, then the humming sound of bees, a bell, a big gong, a trumpet, a kettledrum, a mridanga or a drum, a dundubhi, etc., are heard.

Thus, by practising daily, one has the experience of listening to various sounds and the sound of the shabda (sacred sound or vibration) is produced in anahata. In its resonance comes the internal vision of the twelve-petalled lotus in the heart. With the merging of the mind into the flame, one attains the lotus feet of Lord Vishnu. Thus by perfecting bhramari kumbhaka, one attains the siddhi of samadhi.

Dhyana is eight times superior to japa, tapas (austerity) is eight times superior to dhyana, and music is eight times superior to tapas. There is nothing greater than music.

Nada yoga is discussed under bhramari. The practical technique of bhramari pranayama is slightly different and is considered as the initial stage to balance the mind and internalize the awareness.



Stage I: Sit in a comfortable meditation asana. Close the eyes and relax the whole body. The lips should remain gently closed with the teeth slightly separated and the jaws relaxed throughout the practice. This allows the sound vibrations to be heard and felt more distinctly.

The spinal cord should be erect, the head straight and the hands resting on the knees in chin or jnana mudra. The ideal posture for this practice is padmasana, siddhasana or siddha yoni asana. Raise the arms sideways and bend the elbows, bringing the hands to the ears. Use the index or middle finger to plug the ears.

The position of nadanusandhana asana, which is used in nada yoga, may also be used. Sit on a rolled blanket with the heels drawn up to the buttocks. Place the feet flat on the floor with the knees raised and the elbows resting on the knees. Plug the ears with the thumbs, resting the other four fingers on the head, so that outside sounds do not enter inside.

Bring the awareness to the centre of the head, where ajna chakra is located, and keep the body absolutely still. Breathe in through the nose. Exhale slowly and in a controlled manner while making a deep, steady humming sound like that of the black bee. The humming sound should be smooth, even and continuous for the duration of the exhalation. This is one round. At the end of exhalation, breathe in deeply and repeat the process.

The sound should be soft and mellow, so that the skull reverberates. It is not necessary for the sound to be high, but it is important that the sound vibrations should be felt in the brain. This practice is considered to be excellent for internalizing consciousness.

Stage 2: Continue breathing quietly with the ears closed.

Try to listen to the sounds produced inside by slowly internalizing the awareness and making it subtle. In the beginning, the sound of the breathing is heard. Continue with the practice. After becoming aware of a sound, try to remain totally aware of that particular sound only to the exclusion of other sounds. After several days or weeks of regular practice that particular sound will become increasingly clear and distinct. Keep on listening to that sound with complete awareness. Let the awareness flow only towards that sound and forget all other sounds and thoughts. Sensitivity of perception will be further enhanced by continuous practice.

As the practice deepens, the heartbeat is heard. Going deeper still, the sound of the blood flowing through the veins is heard. Go deeper still and speech will be heard, as if someone is speaking inside. Very far away, the sound of grasshoppers, sparrows and music is heard. In this way, gradually, one's perception becomes more and more acute and sensitive.

In this stage, all these sounds are heard while keeping the ears closed. These sounds are produced inside quite naturally. Some sounds are produced from memory, and

when the region of memory and chitta is crossed, subtle sounds are heard rather than gross sounds. When subtle sound is also crossed, then only nada is heard, which is called *anahad nada*, unbroken sound.

Duration: Five to ten rounds are sufficient in the beginning, then slowly increase to 10–15 minutes. In cases of extreme mental tension or anxiety, or when being used to assist the healing process, practise for up to 30 minutes. For spiritual purposes it may be continued for longer periods.

Time of practice: The best time to practise is early morning or midnight, as there are fewer external noises to interfere with internal perception at that time. Practising at this time awakens psychic sensitivity. However, bhramari may be practised at any time to relieve mental tension, provided the surroundings are peaceful.

Contra-indications: Bhramari should not be performed while lying down. People suffering from severe ear infections should not practise this pranayama until the infection has cleared up. Those with heart disease must practise without breath retention.

Benefits: Bhramari relieves stress and cerebral tension, alleviating anger, anxiety and insomnia, and reducing blood pressure. It speeds up the healing capacity of the body and may be practised after operations. It strengthens and improves the voice and eliminates throat ailments. Bhramari induces a meditative state by harmonizing the mind and directing the awareness inward. It leads to spontaneous meditative experience, inner perception, bliss and ultimately to mastery of samadhi.

Nada or sound waves are related to a *jyoti*, a flame or light. Light is linked with the mind. When there is complete union with the mind or nada, the experience of God occurs. So with bhramari, siddhi or mastery of samadhi is achieved.

The sage also says clearly that the significance or importance of music is even greater than *dhyana*, meditation, and *tapas*, austerity. In meditation the mind has a blissful experience, eight times better than that of *japa*. Austerity gives an experience eight times better again, but in music or *nada* one experiences bliss eight times better than with *tapas*. Nothing is greater than *nada*.

Sage Gheranda has mentioned here that sound is related to a flame or light, light is related to mind and mind is related to *nada* or sound. This means a cycle has been created: *nada*, light, mind and *nada* (sound). The *nada* which is being discussed here is *parananda*, transcendental bliss. Slowly, by crossing different states, listening to gross sounds and subtle *nada*, a subtle state is entered. One listens to subtle sound, experiences it and then enters into *parananda*.

The state of *parananda* itself is the state of light or perception. This state of knowledge or perception influences the mind, and when the mind is engulfed by this experience, only *nada* is heard. Up-down, right-left, in front-behind, everywhere, nothing but *nada* is heard. In this *parananda*, God is experienced. This is the ultimate state of *bhramari*. For this, total patience and effort are essential. If one is firmly determined about the practice, wonderful results will be achieved.

7. MOORCHHA PRANAYAMA (swooning or fainting pranayama)

Verse 85

सुखेन कुम्भकं कृत्वा मनश्च भ्रुवोरन्तरम् ।
सन्त्यज्य विषयान्सर्वान्मनोमूर्च्छां सुखप्रदा ।
आत्मनि मनसो योगादानन्दो जायते ध्रुवम् ॥85॥

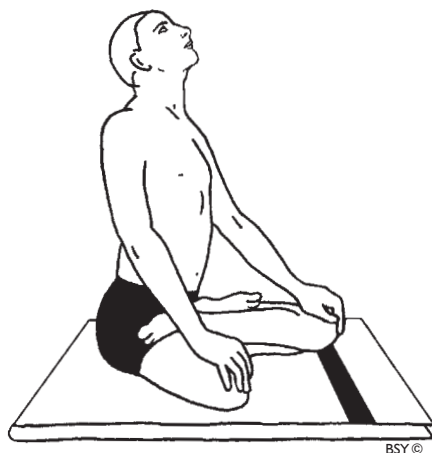
*Sukhena kumbhakam kritvaa manashcha bhruvorantaram;
Santyaajya vishayaansarvaanmanomoorchchhaa sukhapradaa;
Aatmani manaso yogaadaanando jaayate dhruvam.*

Perform breath retention comfortably. Take the mind away from material things and focus it on the eyebrow centre, merging it with the atman. By perfecting moorchha kumbhaka bliss is certainly attained.

Moorchha means becoming unconscious. The practitioner of this pranayama becomes unconscious of the material world, and another state of consciousness is attained. Attachment to the manifest world and body starts to fade and the mind becomes peaceful.

Technique

Moorchha pranayama can be practised in any comfortable meditation asana, preferably padmasana, siddha/siddha yoni asana, swastikasana or ardha padmasana. Vajrasana or even sukhasana can also be used. Keep the head and spine absolutely straight, place the palms on the knees and relax the whole body. Closing the eyes, inhale deeply. Slowly raise the chin so that the face tilts upwards at an angle of 45 degrees. While lifting the head, slowly and gently open the eyes. By the time the head reaches an angle of 45 degrees, the eyes are fully opened and shambhavi mudra is practised.



Straighten the arms by locking the elbows and pressing the knees with the hands. Maintaining shambhavi mudra, retain the breath inside as long as is comfortable. Exhale slowly, bring the head back to the upright position and close the eyes, releasing shambhavi mudra. Relax the arms and body. Experience lightness and tranquillity in the mind and body. This is one round. Breath retention reduces the supply of oxygen to the brain. This is experienced particularly when the breath is held for longer durations. The brain becomes less alert and a sensation of swooning starts to dawn.

Duration: To derive the maximum benefit from moorchha pranayama, it needs to be practised for a longer duration, for example, one hour or more a day. However, the benefit that is derived can be experienced from just a few minutes practice. In the beginning about ten minutes of practice is sufficient. Gradually increase the duration of daily practice. Practise each round for as long as possible without any tension or pressure. Discontinue the practice as soon as a fainting sensation is felt and before falling into an unconscious state.

In moorchha pranayama breath retention is of special significance and while practising this pranayama, the

longer the breath retention, the better the results. Breath retention's direct effect on the mind via the pranic body is the automatic stopping of thoughts.

Sequence: The ideal time for moorchha pranayama is after asanas and before meditation.

Precautions: As the technique induces the sensation of swooning or light-headedness, it should only be practised under the guidance of a competent teacher. In a favourable environment, with complete self-purification, proper diet, etc., it is not difficult to retain the breath for longer durations. However, without the necessary preparations, extended breath retention should not be practised, as it can be harmful.

Contra-indications: This technique should not be practised by those suffering from heart disease, high blood pressure, epilepsy, brain disorders or atherosclerosis of the carotid or basilar arteries.

Practitioners are cautioned against over-practising moorchha pranayama as fainting can occur. The purpose is to disassociate the consciousness from the physical world, the complexities of the mind, and to be lifted above awareness of the physical body. Such a state is swooning or semi-fainting, not complete unconsciousness. Discontinue the practice as soon as a fainting sensation is felt.

Benefits: Moorchha pranayama is a powerful practice. Sage Gheranda says that a person who masters this practice experiences psychic bliss. As the duration of internal breath retention increases, the bliss also increases.

This practice draws the mind inwards and enables a psychic state to be experienced. It cuts out the distractions of the external world, inhibits identification with the physical body and brings about mental tranquillity. An experience of lightness arises with this practice. Tension, anxiety, anger and neuroses are alleviated and there is a letting go of attachment to sensory experiences. A state of void is induced spontaneously. Therefore, moorchha pranayama is an excellent preparation for meditation.

8. KEVALI PRANAYAMA

Verses 86–98

हङ्कारेण बहिर्याति सःकारेण विशेत्पुनः ।
षट्शतानि दिवारात्रौ सहस्राण्येकविंशतिः ।
अजपां नाम गायत्री जीवो जपति सर्वदा ॥86॥
मूलाधारे यथा हंसस्तथा हि हृदि पङ्कजे ।
तथा नासापुटद्वन्द्वे त्रिभिर्हंससमागमः ॥87॥
षण्णवत्यङ्गुलीमानं शरीरं कर्मरूपकम् ।
देहाद्बहिर्गतो वायुः स्वभावात् द्वादशाङ्गुलिः ॥88॥
गायने षोडशाङ्गुल्यो भोजने विंशतिस्तथा ।
चतुर्विंशाङ्गुलि पन्थे निद्रायां त्रिंशदङ्गुलिः ।
मैथुने षट्त्रिंशदुक्तं व्यायामे च ततोऽधिकम् ॥89॥
स्वभावेऽस्य गतेर्न्यूनं परमायुः प्रवर्द्धते ।
आयुःक्षयोऽधिके प्रोक्तो मारुतेचान्तराद्गते ॥90॥
तस्मात्प्राणे स्थिते देहे मरणं नैव जायते ।
वायुना घटसम्बन्धे भवेत्केवलकुम्भकः ॥91॥
यावज्जीवं जपेन्मन्त्रमजपासंख्यकेवलम् ।
अद्यावधि धृतं संख्याविभ्रमं केवली कृते ॥92॥
अत एव हि कर्तव्यः केवलीकुम्भको नरैः ।
केवली चाजपासंख्या द्विगुणा च मनोन्मनी ॥93॥
नासाभ्यां वायुमाकृष्य केवलं कुम्भकं चरेत् ।
एकादिकचतुःषष्टिं धारयेत्प्रथमे दिने ॥94॥
केवलीमष्टधा कुर्याद्यामे यामे दिने दिने ।
अथ वा पञ्चधा कुर्याद्यथा तत्कथयामि ते ॥95॥
प्रातर्मध्याह्नसायाह्ने मध्यरात्रे चतुर्थके ।
त्रिसन्ध्यमथवा कुर्यात्सममाने दिने दिने ॥96॥
पञ्चवारं दिने वृद्धिवरिक्तं च दिने तथा ।
अजपापरिमाणं च यावत्सिद्धिः प्रजायते ॥97॥
प्राणायामं केवलीं च तदा वदति योगवित् ।
केवलीकुम्भके सिद्धे किं न सिध्यति भूतले ॥98॥

*Hankaarena bahiryaati sahkaarena vishetpunah;
Shatshataani divaaraatrau sahasraanyekavimshatih;
Ajapaam naama gaayatream jeevo japati sarvadaa. (86)*

*Moolaadhaare yathaa hamsastathaa hi hridi pankaje;
Tathaa naasaaputadvandve tribhirhamsasamaagamah. (87)*

*Shannavatyanguleemaanam shareeram karmaroopakam;
Dehaadbahirgato vaayuh svabhaavaat dvaadashaangulih. (88)*

*Gaayane shodashaangulyo bhojane vimshatistathaa;
Chaturvimshaanguli panthe nidraayaam trimshadangulih;
Maithune shattrimshaduktam vyaayaame cha tato'dhikam. (89)*

*Svabhaave'sya gaternyoone paramaayuh pravardhate;
Aayuhkshayo'dhike prokto maarutechaantaraadgate. (90)*

*Tasmaatpraane sthite dehe maranam naiva jaayate;
Vaayunaa ghatasambandhe bhavetkevalakumbhakah. (91)*

*Yaavajjeevam japenmantramajapaasankhyakevalam;
Adyaavadhi dhritam sankhyaavibhramam kevalee krite. (92)*

*Ata eva hi kartavyah kevaleekumbhako naraih;
Kevalee chaajapaasankhyaa dvigunaa cha manonmanee. (93)*

*Naasaabhyaam vaayumaakrishya kevalam kumbhakam charet;
Ekaadikachaturshashtim dhaarayetprathame dine. (94)*

*Kevaleemashtadhaa kuryaadyaame yaame dine dine;
Atha vaa panchadhaa kuryaadyathaa tatkathayaami te. (95)*

*Praatarmadhyaahnasaayaahne madhyaraatre chaturthake;
Trisandhyamatha vaa kuryaatsamamaane dine dine. (96)*

*Panchavaaram dine vridddhirvaaraikam cha dine tathaa;
Ajapaaparimaanam cha yaavatsiddhieh prajaayate. (97)*

*Praanaayaamam kevaleem cha tadaa vadati yogavit;
Kevaleekumbhake siddhe kim na sidhyati bhootale. (98)*

The soul of every living being repeats *Ham* with each exhalation and *So* with each inhalation. Every human being takes 21,600 breaths during one day and night. This is called (*Hamso* or *Soham*) ajapa gayatri. Every living being always keeps on repeating this mantra.

The air goes in and out through three places: mooladhara, the heart lotus and the two nostrils. The length of the gross body acquired due to one's karma is 96 angulas (finger-widths) and the length of the natural outgoing air is 12 angulas. When singing, the breath is 16 angulas long, while eating 20 angulas, while walking 24 angulas, during sleep 30 angulas, during sexual intercourse 36 angulas and during exercise even more.

If the length of the natural exhalation is reduced, life is increased. Life expectancy decreases when the length (of exhaled air) is increased. It follows that death does not occur while prana vayu exists in the body. When the prana vayu is spontaneously kept in the body, it is known as kevala kumbhaka.

Throughout life living beings spontaneously keep on repeating the ajapa mantra, yogis must do it consciously. In kevali kumbhaka there is no regular respiration. (If the rate of reduction of respiration) is doubled, then manonmani (extreme bliss) takes place.

Drawing the air through the nostrils, just spontaneously suspend the breath, performing this breath retention known as kevali up to 64 times on the first day.

Kevali kumbhaka should be practised daily eight times (once every three hours) or practised five times as I specify: in the early morning, noon, twilight, midnight and in the fourth quarter of the night. Or practise three times at the three sandhyas (at sunrise, noon and at sunset). Until this practice is perfected, keep on increasing the scale by five times along with ajapa gayatri. One who perfects pranayama and kevali is called a real knower of yoga. Having mastered kevali kumbhaka, what cannot be achieved in this world?

Technique

Kevali pranayama is in fact ajapa japa. In ajapa japa the breath is imagined in three main centres of the body. When inhaling, feel the breath rising up from

mooladhara and reaching nasikagra (nosetip) after crossing anahata chakra. When exhaling, feel the presence of the breath moving downward from the nosetip to mooladhara. As the breath crosses the centres step by step, focus the mind there.

The sage is also imparting knowledge of swara yoga along with these mantras. He says that the length of a human being's life depends on the number of breaths taken per minute. For a long life the length of the flow of air expelled by each exhalation should be minimal. According to yogic principles, the longer and deeper the breath, the better the health but the air should be exhaled subtly so that the flow does not travel far from the nostrils.

An elephant, tortoise and snake breathe slowly. The number of breaths they take per minute is quite low compared to that of an average human being, and they tend to live longer than humans. Those animals who breathe quickly, like the dog, wolf, lion, tiger, etc., have shorter life spans than human beings. By observing these animals and carrying out research on himself, man discovered the science of swara. According to this science, the speed of the breath is dependent on physical activities. If dynamic work is performed, the speed of the breath increases. For this reason a lot of emphasis has been placed on the breath in yogic practices. It is instructed that if breathlessness occurs, the practice should be discontinued. In other words, never let the breath become uncontrolled.

In the light of this science, Sage Gheranda says that the length of the normal breath is 12 *angulas*, or finger-widths. When emotion arises or swells, it increases. For example, if one is practising japa or meditation and during the practice one become emotional, or an emotional change takes place inside, the length of the exhaled breath increases and a sigh may be given on exhalation. When a feeling of love

for someone manifests, whether husband, wife or guru, the length of the breath increases. While eating, it is 20 angulas, while walking it is 24 angulas and during exercise it is even more than 30 angulas. Sage Gheranda says that death cannot come near while there is prana vayu in the body. Longevity depends on retention of prana in the body.

After this, he gives instructions for the practice of kevali pranayama, saying that as long as a human being is alive, one keeps on repeating the ajapa mantra with each breath. Often the attention is diverted and awareness of the mantra is lost, yet the process continues spontaneously. This state is called *kevali*. When awareness of the mantra is added, it becomes ajapa japa. Sage Gheranda has made this differentiation between the conscious practice and the spontaneous mantra of the breath which goes on automatically. In his opinion, a person's only duty, therefore, is to practise kevali.

In conclusion, one can say that in the initial stages practising awareness of the mantra and one's own internal state is maintained. This can prove helpful in self-analysis or introspection. During the day when one is busy with work, contact with the internal personality is lost and many perplexities are faced due to being involved in the vicious circles of the mind. In this externalized state one often wants to selfishly fulfil one's own wishes and desires. Consequently, in order to get to know the state of the mind and to maintain awareness, one should practise (*Hamso* or *Soham*) ajapa regularly each day.

For the advanced practitioners who are being addressed in these sutras, extended periods of practise are possible throughout the day, but this is not possible for busy people with multiple responsibilities. Also, such practitioners would have gradually adapted to the effects of prolonged kumbhaka by perfecting the previous pranayamas (such as moorcha kumbhaka) in terms of the nervous system, metabolism, lifestyle, attitudes, etc.

For the normal practitioner today, ajapa should be practised once or twice a day. Sage Gheranda teaches

that this practice must be done at least three times a day and recommends the three *sandhyas*, times of confluence of energies, at sunrise, noon and sunset. For those who achieve perfection in kevali pranayama, self-knowledge and knowledge of the science of yoga dawn, and nothing is impossible in this world.

Chapter Six

Dhyana

Dhyana

Meditation

One-pointed awareness, *ekagrata*, of an object or thought process is *dhyana*, meditation. In his discussion of *sapta sadhana*, the seven means or practices, in Chapter 1, Sage Gheranda defined *pratyaksha* by saying that if the subtle experiences of the mind can be clarified in front of the inner eye, the inner mental vision, just as clearly as when something is seen in front of the open eyes, that is considered to be a state of meditation.

This state of *pratyaksha* is not the state of *laya*, dissolution, where one does not see anything. Neither is it a state of sensual experience. On the contrary, it is a state in which one sees an inner experience, feels it and establishes oneself in it.

Inner vision

One point has been emphasized – the clarifying of subtle experience in one’s mental vision. If this point is understood, meditation is understood. For example, in the practice of yoga nidra, objects such as trees, plants, fruits, flowers and other items are named and the practitioner is asked to visualize them. In the beginning, nothing can be seen. The initial stage is just imagination, but one keeps on drawing that form or figure in one’s mind. If blood is named, it is not seen or visualized, but a picture appears in the mind. This is

called imagination or viewing an imaginary item. When the state of imagination is deep and the item is observed clearly inside like a photocopy, that state is called meditation

Attention

Once, Shukadeva went to the royal court and said to King Janaka, “People call you a *jivanmukta*, liberated soul, but you are a king. Being a king you have to perform all sorts of deeds: punishing people, dispensing justice, collecting wealth, giving donations, protecting your subjects. How can you be a *jivanmukta* despite all these duties? It is not possible.”

King Janaka thought that he would answer this question in a practical manner. A big festival was being celebrated in the capital at that time. He placed a pot brimming with oil in Shukadeva’s hands and asked him to walk around the whole city, carrying the pot. Shukadeva said, “Only once? Is that all? Why I can do it three times!” The king said, “Fine. My bodyguards will accompany you. They will chop off your head if even one drop of oil spills.”

With great care and awareness, maintaining his balance, Shukadeva moved slowly step by step, in case he stumbled and the oil spilled. With total one-pointedness he completed a circuit of the entire city and returned. King Janaka enquired, “How is the decoration of the city proceeding?” Shukadeva replied, “Maharaja, what decorations?” The king exclaimed, “You wandered around the whole city but saw none of the decorations?” Shukadeva replied, “How could I observe the decorations? I had that pot of oil in my hands!”

King Janaka remarked, “I live exactly the same way.” The king beckoned him closer and said, “Look up.” Shukadeva looked up and noticed, above the throne, a huge dagger suspended by a horse’s hair. King Janaka said, “I run my entire kingdom and its administration while sitting underneath that dagger. I don’t know when it will fall on me and I will die. Each time I sit on the throne, I think it is going to be the last time. Every moment is the last one for me, therefore, my attention is always on *that*.”

Dhyana

The state that Shukadeva experienced was also a state of meditation. The only difference was that there was the fear in his mind that if even a single drop of oil was spilt, he would lose his life. That fear helped him to maintain his one-pointedness. When ekagrata or one-pointedness is acquired in a natural way, it transforms into the state of meditation, and whatever one thinks or imagines in this state of meditation is clearly visualized. Anything that is thought or imagined fructifies; it becomes evident or visible. In yoga, this state is referred to through the image of *kalpa vriksha*, the wish-fulfilling tree.

During the practice of meditation the mind becomes so powerful due to one-pointedness that it acquires the form of the *kalpa vriksha*, a tree which yields anything that is desired. Whatever one wishes is fulfilled. In meditation the flow of consciousness is just like a flow of oil, without any obstruction. In *pratyahara* there is internal awareness. When the mind externalizes, one pulls it back again and engages it. For two or three minutes the mind remains there as long as one is attentive. As soon as the attention is diverted, the mind starts wandering. Thus, in *pratyahara*, awareness and consciousness keep on coming and going. In concentration, *dharana*, the speed of this process is reduced and one can become one-pointed or externalized at will. However, one's effort does not work in meditation.

Meditation is not a practice. Meditation is a state of continuous dynamic consciousness without any obstruction. That is why it is said that meditation is never practised; rather, the state of meditation is acquired, it is experienced. It is like the difference between pouring oil and water. When oil is poured from one pot to another, it comes out in a thick, smooth, continuous flow without any hindrance. When it falls into the other pot, it does not splash and spill like water. The only movement is where the stream of oil is actually falling. The state of meditation is also like that. When there are drips and spills, one is in the state of *pratyahara* and

dharana. However, when the mind does not waiver, when there is no dissipation or obstruction while moving from the externalized state to the internalized state, that is the final stage of meditation.

The human structure or constitution has three main elements: body, mind and spirit. Different states of meditation are experienced in these three components, and in order to make that experience deep and vivid, different processes or techniques are adopted. In the meditative state, when a physical form is adopted in order to move ahead with the experience, this process is called *sthoola dhyana* or gross meditation. When one wants to attain the experience of light, of the *atma*, the soul, that process is called *jyoti dhyana*. When one unites with the soul, it is called *sukshma dhyana* or subtle meditation. Sage Gheranda discusses these three states in the following verses.

Verse 1

स्थूलं ज्योतिस्थासूक्ष्मं ध्यानस्य त्रिविधं विदुः ।
स्थूलं मूर्तिमयं प्रोक्तं ज्योतिस्तेजोमयं तथा ।
सूक्ष्मं बिन्दुमयं ब्रह्म कुण्डली परदेवता ॥ 1॥

Sthoolam jyotisthaasookshmam dhyaanasya trividham viduh;
Sthoolam moortimayam proktam jyotistejomayam tathaa;
Sookshmam bindumayam brahma kundalee paradevataa.

Meditation is of three types: sthoola dhyana, jyoti dhyana and sukshma dhyana. Sthoola dhyana (gross or physical meditation) is that in which one meditates on the physical form (of one's ishta deva or deity). Jyotirmaya dhyana (dhyana full of light) is that in which one meditates on or visualizes the brilliant flame form of Brahman. Sukshma dhyana (subtle meditation) is on Brahman as bindu, as kundalini shakti.

1. STHOOLA DHYANA (gross/physical meditation)

Sage Gheranda has described two techniques of *sthoola dhyana*, basic meditation. The first is meditation on the heart centre or anahata chakra. The second is meditation on brahmarandhra or sahasrara chakra.

MEDITATION ON THE PHYSICAL FORM OF GURU IN THE HEART

Verses 2–8

स्वकीयहृदये ध्यायेत्सुधासागरमुत्तमम् ।
तन्मध्ये रत्नद्वीपं तु सुररत्नवालुकामयम् ॥ 2 ॥
चतुर्दिक्षु नीपतरुं बहुपुष्पसमन्वितम् ।
नोपोपवनसंकुलैर्वेष्टितं परिखा इव ॥ 3 ॥
मालतीमल्लिकाजातीकैसरैश्चम्पकैस्तथा ।
पारिजातैः स्थलपद्मैर्गन्धामोदितदिङ्मुखैः ॥ 4 ॥
तन्मध्ये संस्मरेद्योगी कल्पवृक्षं मनोहरम् ।
चतुःशाखाचतुर्वेदं नित्यपुष्पफलान्वितम् ॥ 5 ॥
भ्रमराः कोकिलास्तत्र गुञ्जन्ति निगदन्ति च ।
ध्यायेत्तत्र स्थिरो भूत्वा महामाणिक्यमण्डपम् ॥ 6 ॥
तन्मध्ये तु स्मरेद्योगी पर्यङ्कं सुमनोहरम् ।
तत्रेष्टदेवतां ध्यायेद्यद्भ्यानं गुरुभाषितम् ॥ 7 ॥
यस्य देवस्य यद्रूपं यथा भूषणवाहनम् ।
तद्रूपं ध्यायते नित्यं स्थूलध्यानमिदं विदुः ॥ 8 ॥

*Svakeeyahridaye dhyayetsudhaasaagaramuttamam;
Tanmadhye ratnadveepam tu suraratnavaalukaamayam. (2)*

*Chaturdikshu neepatarum bahunpushpasamanvitam;
Neepopavanasankulairveshtitam parikhaa iva. (3)*

*Maalateemallikaajaateekaisaraishchampakaistathaa;
Paarijaataih sthalapadmaingandhaamoditadinmukhaih. (4)*

*Tanmadhye samsmaredyogee kalpavriksham manoharam;
Chatuhshaakhaachaturvedam nityapushpaphalaanvitam. (5)*

*Bhramaraah kokilaastatra gunjanti nigadanti cha;
Dhyaayettatra sthiro bhootvaa mahaamaanikyamandapam. (6)*

*Tanmadhye tu smaredyogee paryankam sumanoharam;
Tatreshtheadevataam dhyaaedyaddhyaanam gurubhaashitam. (7)*

*Yasya devasya yadroopam yathaa bhooshanavaahanam;
Tadroopam dhyaaayate nityam sthooladhyaanamidam viduh. (8)*

Focus the attention on the heart. Contemplate a vast ocean filled with nectar. In the middle there is an island full of precious jewels and the sand is also made up of crushed gems. On all four sides there are neepa trees laden with flowers. Surrounding these trees, like trenches on the island, are rows of flowering trees such as malati, mallika, jati, kesara, champaka, parijata and padma, and their fragrance spreads to every corner of the island.

In the middle of the island a tree by the name of kalpa vriksha exists. Its four branches represent the four Vedas. This tree is laden with beautiful fruits and flowers. All over the island the melodious voice of the cuckoo (kokila) and the humming sound of the black honeybee are heard.

There is a terrace with a throne decorated with precious gems. Contemplate your ishta devata sitting on that throne. Meditate on your chosen deity according to the technique taught by your guru. Focus with one-pointedness on that form and various items like the clothing, mala, etc., that your ishta is wearing. With this technique, learned people constantly meditate on the gross or physical form of the divine or their guru.

In order to understand these verses a few points need to be clarified. Some doubts or questions arise. First, the state of meditation is achieved; it is not a technique. If that is so, why is this technique described here?

With this technique the direction given is to meditate on the heart. It has been said in the Upanishads that God

resides in the heart space, *hridayakasha*. Many saints and sages also say to search in one's heart. Whom does one search for in the heart? Who is God? The one who is sitting in *kshera sagara*, the milky ocean, is Narayana. Now anahata chakra needs to be understood. The tattwa of anahata chakra is *vayu*, the air element, but it relates directly to the space element, *akasha*, and *anahad nada*, unstruck sound. Anahad nada is heard in the form of the sound *Aum* or *Om*. The external form of the sound *Aum* is the humming sound of the bee. The humming sound of the bee is manifesting here, and that island made of jewels is full of those nada vibrations, which are the abode of God. These jewels are the *gunas* or qualities of a human being.

Thus, that place which is totally pure and sacred, where there is no illusion or impurity, has been visualized here within anahata, and it has been said that the Lord resides in anahata. The sage has used this image to explain the form of the Lord. In that milky ocean, the chosen deity, *ishta devata*, who has created one, and the guru, who has imparted knowledge, are sitting. The ocean also represents the endless infinite; the ocean and space hint at infinity.

Kalpa vriksha

After pratyahara and dharana, when a state of meditation is entered and the consciousness or awareness is continuously moving without obstruction, it means that one has gone beyond some of the mental states. Only after crossing them has this continuity been attained. Even if it cannot be said that all the states have been overcome, still it can definitely be said that the awareness has now become continuous. The mental fluctuations and impressions which divert and drive the mind away from one-pointedness have ended.

When there is complete concentration on one point, the state of one-pointedness is experienced. Anahad nada is then experienced in the form of the humming sound of the black bee. The inner eye of knowledge is opened, and with the opening of inner vision, one starts observing the kalpa

vriksha, the wish-fulfilling tree, which has four branches: the four Vedas: *Rig Veda*, *Sama Veda*, *Yajur Veda* and *Atharva Veda*. All material and spiritual knowledge is contained in these four Vedas.

When the free or liberated nature begins to be recognized, and the inner qualities begin to be observed, that knowledge, perception and awareness awakens the intuitive eye from which past, present and future are not concealed. All knowledge is clearly and vividly seen in the form of the Vedas. In this state the mind should be focused on the Lord or on the image of the guru, because the focus of sthoola dhyana is the image or *murti*. This technique has been given here for a specific purpose, so that there is no boost to the ego in this state of dhyana, no feeling that 'I have achieved'. Therefore, one should focus on the divine essence, *Ishwara tattwa*, in the form of guru or on a form of God, so that the knowledge is maintained that it is His gift. *Naaham kartaa*, *Harih kartaa*. *Hari kartaa hi kevalam*, I am not the doer, He is the doer. Only the Lord is the doer.

The battle

Even in this state of meditation, where a *para nada* or transcendental sound like anahad nada is being experienced, something again comes to the forefront. One is not liberated from the intellect, and intellectualization of that state will still be experienced. To ensure that no negative element takes root and that the intellect does not pull one down towards worldly matters once again, instructions are given to meditate on Ishwara tattwa. There are many pitfalls in *sadhana marga*, the path of practice. As one progresses towards the final state, the lower inclinations or tendencies of the mind become strong and make strenuous efforts to stop one escaping from their clutches.

In the struggle between the world and the spirit that takes place at the end, one has to be impregnable or invincible. This struggle took place in Buddha's life. Only God knows how many demons he struggled with while sitting under the

bodhi or holy fig tree. A demon called Mara tried to disrupt his penance. Such an event will be seen in every sage's life.

Introversion and extroversion

Sage Gheranda has described the first phase of *sthoola dhyana* under the points described above. The following diagrams can be used to assist in understanding the normal state of consciousness and the one-pointed state, in order to clarify the process of meditation.

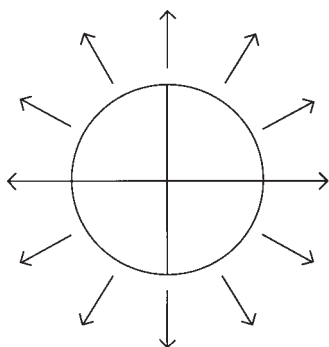


Figure. 1: Consciousness or awareness is inclined outside (extroverted)

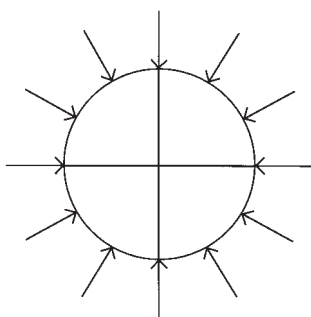


Figure. 2: Consciousness or awareness is inclined inside (introverted)

The circle represented in these two diagrams can be given different names. It can be called a region of the mind, a region of consciousness or a region of the experience of the individual soul. It can be given any name according to one's understanding. For now it can be called a region of consciousness, because if it is called a region of the mind, it has the further divisions of *manas* (mind), *buddhi* (intellect), *chitta* (memory) and *ahamkara* (ego). If it is called a region of the individual soul, the experiences of *sthoola* (gross), *sukshma* (subtle), *karana* (causal), etc., are included. Therefore, think of it as a region of consciousness, in which everything can be included, leaving aside conflicting thoughts.

Through this 'circular region' one is linked with the world. However, it is not pure consciousness itself that links one with the world. For example, if thoughts come to the mind, these thoughts do not originate or manifest in the region of consciousness, but out of a form of consciousness. If one performs an act, the inspiration for that performance does not come from pure consciousness. The activity takes place after a decision comes from the intellect according to the situation and experience. So the state of consciousness here is formed by the situation.

Consciousness can be compared to an electric light bulb, whose light is experienced throughout an entire room and does not remain confined to the bulb. The actions and reactions of consciousness, their results and influences on one's life are experienced in many areas connected with oneself, one's family and society. A distinction is being made between the bulb and its light, and being aware that the light has a relationship with a positive or negative result. In the same way, the experiences of an individual soul are considered to be inspired by consciousness.

The arrows emanating from the circle in Figure 1 are the results. These results take place only when the individual soul has a link with the world. The world existed prior to one's birth and it will exist after one's death, but in this lifetime the individual considers himself to be essential and indispensable, as if nothing will otherwise be accomplished. The world was going on before one's birth and it will go on afterwards as well, but before birth one was not embodied so there was no contact with the manifest, and it was not needed. However, when one comes in the manifested form and observes, "I am such and such a person, I am living, thinking, and behaving like this and like that," one has material awareness. This extroverted awareness has been depicted by the arrows coming out of the circle in Figure 1.

Material awareness

In order to understand meditation it is important to understand material awareness. No one is without consciousness. Consciousness is within, but at this moment it is not being felt. As the experience of the material world becomes strong, consciousness shifts. If the mind becomes attached to the thought of sensual pleasure and this thought hovers over the mind, nothing else will be heard at that time. For example, if someone enters the room with a basket of fruit, everyone will look towards that side of the room because something new has happened and their consciousness or awareness immediately shifts there.

Running after sensual pleasures, awareness of materialistic objects and transferring one's consciousness to worldly matters is the normal position. Many cannot change it until the end of their lives. Of course, some great people can change it, but ordinary people cannot do so.

Pratyahara

Next, instead of going outward one goes inward. The process of going inward is called pratyahara. The difference is that one now takes the awareness away from external matters. In Figure 2 it can be seen that the arrows are now moving inward, but the place is the same. The sum and substance is that the awareness which ran after sensual pleasures changes focus, and now focuses in the region of mind or consciousness. This is the state of pratyahara. However, this is only the preliminary state of pratyahara, the region of the mind has not been entered.

In the state of pratyahara the mind does not just become internalized. In the *Yoga Sutras* of Sage Patanjali and elsewhere it is stated briefly that in perfect pratyahara the mind does become internalized. However, the actual process is to first remove the awareness from materialistic objects. After this comes the state where one enters the region of consciousness. When the region of consciousness is entered and the mind or awareness is removed from worldly matters, it is called the state of *dharana* or concentration.

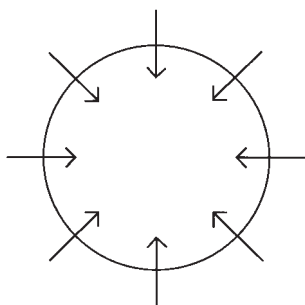


Figure 3: Entering the state of mind or consciousness

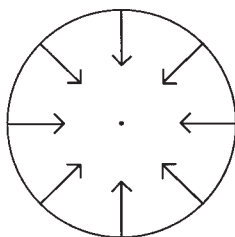


Figure 4: No relationship with the outside world – going deeper into consciousness

First, one is in the normal state in which all one's attention is moving outside (Figure 1). Second, in *pratyahara* (Figure 2) one moves inward, and third, in *dharana* (Figure 3) one enters inside.

Dharana

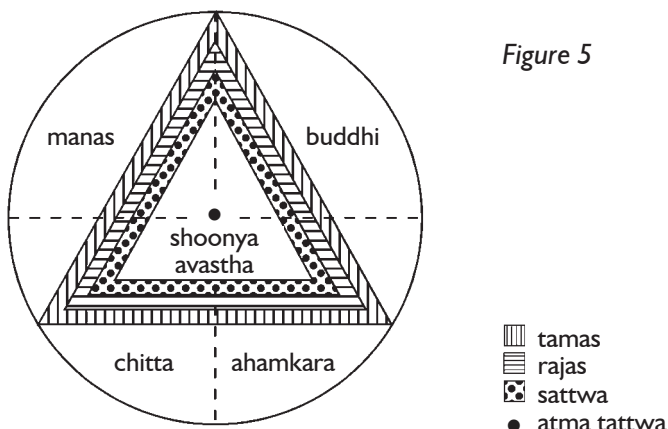
It is here that conflict arises as to whether the practice of *dharana* should be considered as part of *dhyana* or as a separate state. However, this question ends once one begins to observe the inner states of the region of consciousness itself and experience the state of meditation, *dhyana*.

Dhyana

Now the inner state of the region of consciousness will start to be observed.

The three triangles in Figure 5 represent the three *gunas* or qualities: *sattwa*, *rajas* and *tamas*. *Tamas* is the quality of inertia, *rajas* is activity and *sattwa* is the quality of luminosity. These are the basic forms of the *gunas*.

In the centre of the triangles there is a *bindu*, a point or dot, which can be called *paramatma*, the Supreme Soul, or *atma tattva*, the individual self, soul or spirit, or whatever name one wants to give it. The area between the point or dot (*bindu*) and the triangles (the *gunas*) is *shoonya avastha*, the void state.



Whatever is observed in the form of *manas* (mind), *buddhi* (intellect) and *chitta* (memory) is in fact *prakriti*, nature.

It is said that from bindu, *nada* or sound is produced. *Bindu* is the base of external manifest consciousness, whether it is called God, Ishwara or Paramatma or just atma, the soul. In the Vedas the same concept is expressed by the word Paramatma. Paramatma alone is the centre of creation and dissolution for everything. At the end everything merges into Paramatma and from there the sound called anahad nada or para nada is produced. *Para nada* is unmanifest not manifest sound; it is the basis not the result, action not reaction. *Anahad nada* has the same meaning: sound which is not played, which cannot be heard externally. To hear a sound, whether gross or subtle, one must have the gunas and *antahkarana* (*manas*, *buddhi*, *chitta* and *ahamkara*). However, it has been said that anahad nada is beyond the gunas and *antahkarana*.

Meditation is an excellent means through which to know the Paramatma. Even people who do not attach any significance to a particular form will have to agree that it is essential to have some form or shape for meditation.

Crossing the boundaries

As one enters the state of meditation and goes inside the region of consciousness, various boundaries are crossed. Shoonya avastha, the void state, is not attained at the very first attempt. It is like an old style fort which had a number of gates to check or stop an enemy assault. If one gate was destroyed, a defence would be mounted from the second gate, and when that was lost, they would defend from the third gate.

Everything depends upon awareness here. As long as one remains aware, observes and experiences, and makes the effort to remain alert, various obstacles will be encountered. However, when one just lets go of oneself, the awareness crosses these obstacles and for a few moments one has certain spiritual experiences. When the awareness converts this experience into a material form and starts to focus on it, one-pointedness is established. If, however, that experience is received in a material form, that unlimited experience is limited by converting it into that material form.

When one moves into a special state of relaxation, such as during yoga nidra or while sleeping at night, the mind is diverted from the external world, but internal awareness remains. While dreaming, one can know that one is dreaming, although it is difficult to maintain that awareness at all times. Similarly, if something is experienced while practising yoga nidra, one knows that it is happening, but as one comes out of the practice, the memory is lost.

Similarly, during meditation there may be a pleasant experience, but as one comes out of it, that experience cannot be brought back; it hides itself down memory lane. If, however, one does not disturb oneself by grasping or regarding the experience as a sensual pleasure or attraction, it will stay for some time. For this reason it is advised not to intellectualize during the practice of yoga nidra, but to just be aware. The moment intellectualization begins, thinking it is happening like this or like that, one is no longer in the state of yoga nidra. This instruction not only applies to yoga

nidra, but must be followed in any meditation or any kind of internal process.

Until now three of the four aspects of the antahkarana: manas, mind, buddhi, intellect, and chitta, memory or consciousness, have been looked at. Now the fourth aspect, *ahamkara*, ego, will be discussed.

When the nada which originated from bindu comes in contact with the three gunas or qualities of nature: sattwa, rajas and tamas, different experiences arise. When it comes in contact with rajas, the feeling of *aham karta*, I am the doer, arises. When it comes in contact with tamas, *aham*, 'I', is experienced in the form of pride or vanity. When it comes in contact with sattwa one remains aware of the divine source. The gunas are constantly interacting, when the three gunas come in contact with manas, buddhi and chitta, it assumes the form of a person and is called *ahamkara* or ego.

MEDITATION ON THE GROSS OR PHYSICAL FORM OF THE GURU IN SAHASRARA

Verses 9–15

सहस्रारे महापद्मे कर्णिकायां विचिन्तयेत् ।
विलग्नसहितं पद्मं दलैर्द्वादशभिर्युतम् ॥ 9 ॥
शुक्लवर्णं महातेजो द्वादशैर्बीजभाषितम् ।
ह स क्ष म ल व र युं ह स ख क्रै यथाक्रमम् ॥ 10 ॥
तन्मध्ये कर्णिकायां तु अकथादिरेखात्रयम् ।
ह ल क्ष कोण संयुक्तं प्रणवं तत्र वर्तते ॥ 11 ॥
नादबिन्दुमयं पीठं ध्यायेत्तत्र मनोहरम् ।
तत्रोपरि हंसयुग्मं पादुका तत्र वर्तते ॥ 12 ॥
ध्यायेत्तत्र गुरुं देवं द्विभुजं च त्रिलोचनम् ।
श्वेताम्बरधरं देवं शुक्लगन्धानुलेपनम् ॥ 13 ॥
शुक्लपुष्पमयं माल्यं रक्तशक्तिसमन्वितम् ।
एवंविधगुरुध्यानात्स्थूल ध्यानं प्रसिध्यति ॥ 14 ॥
स्थूलध्यानं तु कथितं तेजोध्यानं शृणुष्व मे ।
यद्ध्यानेन योगसिद्धिरात्मप्रत्यक्षमेव च ॥ 15 ॥

*Sahasraare mahaapadme karnikaayaam vichintayet;
Vilagnasahitam padmam dalairdvaadashabhiryutam. (9)*

*Shuklavarnam mahaatejo dvaadashairbeejabhaashitam;
Ha sa ksha ma la va ra yum ha sa kha phrem yathaakramam. (10)*

*Tanmadhye karnikaayaam tu akathaadirekhaatrayam;
Ha la ksha kona samyuktam pranavam tatra vartate. (11)*

*Naadabindumayam peetham dhyaayettatra manoharam;
Tatropari hamsayugmam paadukaa tatra vartate. (12)*

*Dhyaayettatra gurum devam dvibhujam cha trilochanam;
Shvetaambaradharam devam shuklagandhaanulepanam. (13)*

*Shuklapushpamayam maalyam raktashaktisamanvitam;
Evamvidhagurudhyaanaatsthoola dhyaanam prasidhyati. (14)*

*Sthooladhyaanam tu kathitam tejodhyaanam shrinushva me;
Yaddhyaanena yogasiddhiraatmapratyakshameva cha. (15)*

In the region of sahasrara there is a large lotus which has one thousand petals and in its central region there is a very small lotus with twelve petals. These petals are white in colour and full of brightness. The bija (seed) mantras which enhance the beauty of these twelve petals are: *Ha* ह, *Sa* स, *Ksha* क्ष, *Ma* म, *La* ल, *Va* व, *Ra* र, *Yum* यं *Ha* ह, *Sa* स, *Kha* ख and *Phrem* फ्र. In the centre of the lotus there are three lines, *A* अ, *Ka* क and *Tha* थ, with colours. These three lines join to form a triangle. The symbolic *shabda*, or sound, of the angles of this triangle are *Ham* हं, *Lam* लं and *Ksham* क्षं. In the centre (of the triangle) stands the pranava mantra *Aum* ॐ.

Visualize a pair of swans, the symbol of the guru's sandals, sitting in the centre of the thousand-petalled lotus in the symbolic form of light (bindu) and sound (nada). The guru sitting in the white lotus has two hands and three eyes. He is wearing white clothes and a garland made of white flowers and on his left side is Shakti adorned in red. Siddhi (perfection) is attained in sthoola dhyana by meditating on the guru in this manner.

This is a description of gross and subtle meditation in sahasrara. The characteristic of sahasrara is a thousand-petalled lotus. Within it is a twelve-petalled lotus which has a bija mantra on each petal. It also contains the symbol of nada and bindu, two swans, guru and his shakti.

When the consciousness becomes subtle after anahata meditation, and the experience of that nada is created inside, a change takes place. The state symbolized here in the form of a thousand-petalled lotus is one of the various *pratyayas*, *samskaras* or impressions in the field of consciousness, because as long as consciousness is not completely pure and homogeneous and these *samskaras* remain, the state of *samadhi* or *moksha*, liberation, is not achieved. These impressions in the *bija* or seed form are *adi iccha*, original desire, *adi kriya*, original action, and *adi sankalpa*, original resolve.

Since these impressions exist in the causal form, no one knows them, but they have a very strong hold. Suppose there is some internal tamasic *pratyaya*, impression, in the field of consciousness. One sits in the state of meditation, reaches the eternal, but due to that tamasic *pratyaya* one is not able to go beyond *trigunatmic prakriti*, nature comprised of the three *gunas*. In some form or other a *samskara*, karma or *vasana* will appear and have to be destroyed or removed every time one attempts meditation.

There is only one way to ward this off. As far as possible one should identify the experiences and states manifesting inside by means of repeated practise of *pratyahara*, *dharana* and preparatory *dhyana*, before entering the subtle sphere of sahasrara. When the *karmas* start being exhausted, at the end one's field of activity becomes much less. So here, the one thousand petals of sahasrara are symbols of the various *pratyayas* in their seed form or causal state.

Purifying consciousness

Yogis believe that *pratyayas* or impressions can be removed by the practice of mantra. For this reason they have

assigned one thousand mantras in sahasrara. They must have experienced something which gave them a basis for discovering a way to eradicate the obstacles.

Inside the thousand-petalled lotus there is a twelve-petalled lotus. These twelve petals represent gradations in the three different gradations of the four states of *jagrat*, wakefulness, *swapna*, dream, *nidra*, often translated as sleep, and *turiya*, bliss. Jagrat-swapna, jagrat-nidra, jagrat-turiya, swapna-jagrat, swapna-nidra, swapna-turiya, nidra-jagrat, nidra-swapna, nidra-turiya, turiya-jagrat, turiya-swapna and turiya-nidra are the twelve states. Yogis believe that varying degrees of consciousness can be experienced in each of these four states provided inner awareness is maintained. Medical science is also slowly reaching this conclusion.

Sahasrara is the centre where all four states can be experienced: wakefulness, dreaming and sleeping, and beyond. There the two swans in the form of nada and bindu manifest. Bindu is a subtle cosmic centre which manifests and, in the end, merges into subtle cosmic existence. The energy which is needed to give shape or form to this is nada. Both have been considered to be pure elements and so have been compared to a pair of swans. In stories from the Puranas it is said that a swan has such fine discrimination that it can separate milk from water. It means that only a person who has already acquired that kind of capability can separate pure from impure elements. It is a condition in which both the elements, Shiva and Shakti, remain fully awakened inside a human being, so both are visualized as swans or as the sandals, *padukas*, of the guru. This comparison with the sandals of the guru, the *guru padukas*, is an emotional point.

The fire of bhakti

When the pure state has been reached, what is the difference? When the entire creation is seen as one with the self, when the entire creation is recognized as the form of the almighty God, where is the difference? When one experiences that oneself, what is the difference? The fact that

one is experiencing means a little bit of the difference of 'I' always remains. However, when I observe the pure element and have reached it, all my inner obstructions and obstacles are already removed. In the state of surrender, I do not see myself in that form; I merge with that form.

Here something has been added from *bhakti marga*, the path of devotion. I am not Rama; I am not Krishna; I wish to be one with them. But later, if I consider myself to be Rama or Krishna, where is the question of being one with them? This feeling of surrender is expressed by calling up the image of the guru's sandals for worship. The emotional or devotional charge between guru and disciple fires the process of surrender. It becomes an oblation of the self or soul to the pure element, so that 'I' does not remain 'I' any more.

Symbols in sahasrara

It has been said that in this lotus three lines meet, forming a triangle. In the three angles of this triangle the mantras *Ha* ह, *La* ल and *Ksha* क्ष are written. *Lam* लं is the mantra of the earth element or mooladhara chakra. *Ham* हं and *Ksham* क्शं are the mantras of ajna chakra. Sahasrara is a centre which has the sun, moon and earth elements linked in a triangle. This inverted triangle represents *shakti tattwa* or the energy element. In this inverted triangle reside a pair of swans in the form of nada and bindu, and a guru wearing a white robe and a white garland is seated there.

White is the symbol of being spotless, pure, sacred and illumined, without defect, luminous, and that is guru or Ishwara (the Lord). At his side Shakti (energy) is sitting dressed in red. Kamalatmika shakti is considered to be the goddess of sahasrara, where the expansion of consciousness takes place. Thus nada, bindu, guru and the energy of expansion are sitting together in the triangle.

Aims of meditation

This type of meditation practice is called sthoola dhyana. It is related to the mind and its different states, and is not

done in order to achieve inner peace or higher experiences. These do result, but as side effects. Meditation is practised primarily to see and understand oneself. The art of understanding one's inner self is a science in itself: it is the psychology or science of the self. In yoga, this ancient science of the self uses different techniques of meditation.

The life of a human being has many levels and facets. In this life one does experience passing through hostile states, so how should they be faced ? How should one face difficult situations? At these times inner conflict is often experienced, because the biggest problem in this multifaceted life is learning how to adequately develop the discriminating power of the mind.

There is a basic perspective, an understanding or viewpoint in everyone's mind and one is generally incapable of moving away from that position. When an attempt is made, one's base moves or shifts, and one may feel unbalanced. As the ability to discriminate between reality and unreality develops, the perspective shifts. To pass through this unbalanced state is the biggest problem a human faces. If the shift can be managed, one can successfully engage in any effort; for example, one can accumulate property, or if one has a disease, one can try to eradicate it. However, the centre of inspiration or the centre of desire is the mind. If this becomes baseless, a person cannot look for help and cannot be helped by others.

This is a common state, meaning one is unable to face certain types of problems in one's life, in family and society. It is also a major cause of restlessness. When, however, the power of discrimination is awakened successfully, and all the levels of one's life can be seen with an unbiased attitude, identifying one's own strengths and weaknesses, there is no problem.

Preparations for meditation

Whatever Sage Gheranda has discussed here concerns experiences gained during meditation. He has not revealed

which state one will have to go through before having this experience or what its preliminary processes might be. In order to understand even the preliminary state, one has to go through different situations according to one's personality, mentality, behaviour and concepts in each situation, as different aspects of one's mentality appear in different situations.

People often say that they feel very well in the ashram and have good experiences, but nothing happens to them at home. It is difficult for them to understand that when a person lives in a specific place with a favourable environment, it brings forth a spectrum of feeling, thought and behaviour from one's own personality. A different situation brings forth a different spectrum.

Here, Sage Gheranda has not described the journey into the state of meditation, he has only described the result, the final goal, not the process. The process can only be understood by the person undergoing the experience. And this is possible only when the power of discrimination, the capacity to understand and the ability to observe from an appropriate and comprehensive viewpoint are attained, not before that. This is the difference between a *yogi*, ascetic, and a *bhogi*, enjoyer of sensual pleasures. A *yogi* tries to adopt a comprehensive or broad viewpoint, whereas a *bhogi* living in a restricted environment lives under the influence of that environment.

Sustained effort

The question arises here as to how a yogic attitude can be awakened and the inclination towards enjoying worldly things removed. In order to perfect and completely master a state, effort is required, and effort is possible only when the mind is under control. The mind is always running after new sensorial objects. Sometimes it is attracted towards one worldly object, then another. Sometimes there is attraction to many sensual objects at once, causing mental confusion and restlessness.

For example, even in the *Yoga Sutras* it is said that effort should be made to focus the mind on something:

Tat-pratishedartham-eka-tattva-abhyaasah (1:32)

One can try to do this by concentrating on one tattva. If this does not serve the purpose, the virtue should be cultivated which counterbalances the situation: practising friendliness, compassion, gladness and indifference respectively towards happiness, sorrow, virtue and vice:

Maitree-karunaa-mudita-upekshaanaam sukha-duhkha-punya-apunya-vishayaanaam-bhaavanaatah-chitta-prasaadanam (1:33)

If this does not work, practise pranayama:

Prachchhardana-vidhaaranaabhyaam vaa praanasya (1:34)

If it is not achieved by pranayama, practise developing awareness in dream or sleep states:

Svapna-nidraa-jnaana-aalambana-vaa (1:38)

There is a long list of options, but if it is not accomplished by any of these means, another technique is used:

Yathaa-abhimata-dhyanaat-vaa (1:39)

Or by meditation as desired.

Different techniques work for different people and even for the same person at different times. Only one method or technique works in every situation of life, no matter whether it is a family, social or national problem – there is just one secret: to observe the multi-levelled mind with extensive awareness. A person who can understand this does not require yoga, does not need spirituality, need not be a believer or a non-believer in God, but will definitely become a perfect human being.

Ultimately, when one progresses further by knowing and understanding one's inner self, observing the different states and gaining experiences, one finally reaches the root of one's

personality and is faced by one's inner qualities. The state which exists before facing the *gunas* or qualities has been called *sthoola dhyana* by Sage Gheranda.

2. JYOTI DHYANA (meditation full of light)

Verses 16–17

मूलाधारे कुण्डलिनी भुजङ्गाकाररूपिणी ।
तत्र तिष्ठति जीवात्मा प्रदीपकलिकाकृतिः ।
ध्यायेत्तेजोमयं ब्रह्म तेजोध्यानं परात्परम् ॥ 16 ॥
भ्रूवोर्मध्ये मनऊर्ध्वे यत्तेजः प्रणवात्मकम् ।
ध्यायेज्जवालावलीयुक्तं तेजोध्यानं तदेव हि ॥ 17 ॥

*Moolaadhaare kundalinee bhujangaakaararopinee;
Tatra tishthati jeevaatmaa pradeepakalikaakritih;
Dhyaayettejomayam brahma tejodhyaanam paraatparam. (16)*

*Bhroovormadhye manaoordhve yattejah pranavaatmakam;
Dhyaayejjvaalaavaleeyuktam tejodhyaanam tadeva hi. (17)*

In mooladhara, kundalini exists in the form of a serpent. The soul (jivatma) resides here in the form of the flame of a lamp. Meditating here on the luminous Supreme Soul itself is *tejo dhyana*, i.e. *jyoti dhyana*.

The *pranava jyoti* or flame exists in between the two eyebrows and in the upper portion of the mind. Meditating on that blazing flame itself is called *tejo dhyana*.

When the *gunas* are crossed, a state arises called *shoonya avastha*, the void state, in common parlance. However, that *shoonya avastha* is not the real *shoonya avastha* in the *sattwic* sense, for activity is still taking place there; there are vibrations, *nada* and experience exist. It has been termed *shoonya*, void, because different dimensions of the personality

have been crossed according to one's knowledge. Even the gunas can be known; one has crossed the gunas or qualities. After this, the region that is attained is unknown because it has not been described anywhere, nor can it be described, as it can only be experienced.

Therefore, the experience here has been called *shoonya avastha*. However, yoga maintains that it is not void. Yoga says that vibrations, activity, experience and light also exist in this state.

Sage Gheranda says that meditating in this *shoonya avastha* on the brilliant, limitless existence, Brahman, Supreme Soul or self, is called *jyoti dhyana*, meditation on light, and he describes two forms: *tejo dhyana* and *pranava dhyana*.

Tejo dhyana

According to Sage Gheranda, not only is *kundalini shakti* sleeping in the form of a serpent in *mooladhara*, but the soul of the human being resides in the same place in the form of the flame of a lamp. The instruction is to meditate on this form of the soul in *mooladhara*. From the viewpoint of the elements, *mooladhara chakra* is a symbol of the earth element, the final development of creation.

Everyone lives within the attraction of the earth element. The earth element is neither this land nor this planet, nor is it soil, sand, stones, etc. The whole of creation is in the form of the earth element, irrespective of what it is called, along with different states of life. That consciousness which people call *jivatma* or the individual self is only manifest within the earth element. So meditating on the light of the individual soul in the earth element, i.e. meditating on the higher self in the final state of creation, is called *tejo dhyana*.

Just as there is a difference between a bulb and its light or the sun and its light, in exactly the same manner there is a difference between the self and the experience of the self. The sun is a centre and the light that emanates from the sun

pervades everything. The light of electricity is produced by the bulb, but that light pervades the whole room and does not remain confined to the bulb.

Both are integrated; without the bulb there is no light and without light the bulb has no meaning, but still there is a difference between the two. The centre is at one point, but its light is everywhere. Therefore, that expansion or comprehensiveness, and experiencing and observing the form of the self in the whole range of experiences that are had in that comprehensiveness, is one method of jyoti dhyana.

Pranava dhyana

The second method of jyoti dhyana is, *Bhroovormadhye manaoordhve cha yattejah pranavaatmakam*. *Pranava*, the mantra *Om* or *Aum*, full of light, is located beyond the brain in the eyebrow centre. *Dhyaayejjvaalaavaleeyuktam tejodhyaanam tadeva hi*, this *pranava* is the symbol of the soul or self. Meditation on this bright illuminating light is known as *pranava dhyana*.

Earlier it was said that the soul resides in mooladhara. Now it is said that the soul lives in the eyebrow centre, *bhrumadhya*. How can it be in two places? Sage Gheranda says the soul has two forms. One is the external manifest form, which is in the earth element. The other is the unmanifest form, which is in the eyebrow centre or in ajna. Ajna chakra symbolizes the pure state, the pure nature or pure consciousness. It is only after reaching this state that the different *tattwas* and *bhootas*, or elements, are experienced.

So the soul which is in mooladhara is manifest and the light of the soul can be experienced in that centre. The soul also resides in ajna chakra; there one can know the experience of the soul in the supreme region, *para kshetra*. Both *para*, transcendental, and *apara*, lower, states are being discussed here. Both these *lokas*, planes or states, are absolutely full of the light of the soul.

The soul which is in mooladhara is in the form of kundalini and the soul which is in bhrumadhya, the eyebrow

centre, is in the form of God or Aum. When meditation is performed on both these centres, perfection is achieved in yogic science. In the state of void (shoonya avastha) when only the light of the higher self is experienced without seeing worldly matter and sensorial objects, there is the experience of vibration or nada (sound).

When the region within reach of *para nada*, transcendental sound, is entered, it is called the region of light or flame, and as one comes closer to the apex, one becomes capable of hearing the root vibrations.

3. SUKSHMA DHYANA (subtle meditation)

Verses 18–22

तेजोध्यानं श्रुतं चण्ड सूक्ष्मध्यानं शृणुष्व मे ।
 बहुभाग्यवशाद्यस्य कुण्डली जाग्रती भवेत् ॥ 18॥
 आत्मना सह योगेन नेत्ररन्ध्राद्विनिर्गता ।
 विहरेद्राजमार्गे च चञ्चलत्वान्न दृश्यते ॥ 19॥
 शाम्भवी मुद्रया योगो ध्यानयोगेन सिध्यति ।
 सूक्ष्मध्यानमिदं गोप्यं देवानामपि दुर्लभम् ॥ 20॥
 स्थूलध्यानाच्छतगुणं तेजोध्यानं प्रचक्षते ।
 तेजोध्यानाल्लक्षगुणं सूक्ष्मध्यानं परात्परम् ॥ 21॥
 इति ते कथितं चण्ड ध्यानयोगं सुदुर्लभम् ।
 आत्मसाक्षाद्भवेद्यस्मात्तस्माद्ध्यानं विशिष्यते ॥ 22॥

*Tejodhyaanam shrutam chanda sookshmadhyaanam shrinushva me;
 Bahubhaagyavashaadyasya kundalee jaagratee bhavet. (18)*

*Aatmanaa saha yogena netrarandhraadviniirgataa;
 Viharedraajamaarge cha chanchalatvaanna drishyate. (19)*

*Shaambhavee mudrayaa yogo dhyaanayogena sidhyati;
 Sookshmadhyaanamidam gopyam devaanaamapi durlabham. (20)*

*Sthooladhyanaachchhatagunam tejodhyaanam prachakshate;
 Tejodhyanaaallakshagunam sookshmadhyaanam paraatparam. (21)*

*Iti te kathitam chanda dhyaanayogam sudurlabham;
Aatmasaakshaadbhavedhyasmaattasmaaddhyaanam vishishyate. (22)*

O Chanda, you have heard about tejo dhyana (jyoti dhyana), now I shall describe sukshma dhyana. If by great good fortune the kundalini shakti is awakened, it unites with the atma or soul, rises above the eye sockets and travels the raja marga, but it is not seen because of its subtleness and restlessness.

Practising shambhavi mudra, a yogi should meditate (on kundalini). This is called sukshma dhyana, which is extremely secret and is not accessible even to the gods.

Jyoti dhyana is one hundred times superior to sthoola dhyana and sukshma dhyana is one hundred thousand times superior to jyoti dhyana. O Chanda! I have told you about this extremely inaccessible dhyana yoga. One attains self-realization by perfecting supreme meditation.

While describing the technique of sukshma dhyana, Sage Gheranda says that if a sadhaka or practitioner is fortunate enough, it is possible to unite with the soul or self by practising this meditation. With the awakening of kundalini, one's consciousness is united with the limitless existence. When one's self merges with the higher self, no difference remains between oneself and the soul.

The meaning of *sukshma* here is not the normal meaning of 'subtle'. *Sukshma dhyana* means the real meditation. Now there is no interval or space. Now there is no distance or difference. Now I am not meditating on the light, but I have already attained that centre from where it originated. When I attain that centre, then *moksha*, liberation, and *jnana*, knowledge, are achieved.

This meditation has not been described in detail because once a person reaches that state, there is no need for description. It is only said that on reaching this meditation one attains self-realization. It is becoming one with the soul or higher self.

Chapter Seven

Samadhi

Samadhi: Highest State of Consciousness

While it is true that no one is able to describe the state of samadhi, still the saints and sages have given some guidelines based on their experiences. Samadhi has been described differently in the *Yoga Sutras*, *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*, *Gheranda Samhita* and other texts, but all the sages and thinkers agree on one point: that samadhi is a state which can be achieved by mankind.

Once during a discussion, my guru, Swami Satyananda Saraswati, made two statements about samadhi. One was that in the state of samadhi, the individual soul, *jivatma*, merges with the Supreme Soul, *paramatma*. The second statement was that self-realization can be attained in the state of samadhi. From just these two statements, it can be understood that the individual soul ('I') and the Supreme Self, that limitless existence, become one. By the merging of 'I' (a limited existence) and paramatma (an unlimited existence) my limited existence ends and His limitless existence pervades me.

Now, when it is said that in the state of samadhi, knowledge of the self, *atma jnana*, or self-realization is attained, that also means that until the end, until one is in the state of meditation, there is a continuing effort to purify the impure elements inside and to exhaust one's karmas. In the course of this effort, when a state is achieved where all possible karmas have been exhausted and nothing else remains, then self-realization is attained.

It can be inferred that on the path to self-realization there must be some processes and techniques, because the karmas are exhausted in the state of dhyana or meditation. In other words, much self-introspection can be carried out, recognizing one's inner shortcomings, defects, qualities, etc., and trying to eliminate or exhaust them to the best of one's ability. Only then can knowledge be attained, opening up states which were not experienced earlier. When these states are experienced, then whatever karmas are performed no longer remain karmas, but manifest in the form of different states of samadhi. The sum and substance is that the dimension known to mankind has been crossed.

Beyond human boundaries

When the human boundary or limit has been crossed, knowledge is gained of a dimension which is ahead. Thus different states are achieved. These states are different types of samadhi, each of which has a name. Becoming one, or self-realization, is the result of attaining a pure state of consciousness. As long as any disorders or distortions are present, they will keep surfacing as obstacles. This is the first point.

The second point is that the sages have divided all the situations of life, karmas or actions, behaviour and lifestyle into two parts: pravritti marga and nivritti marga. *Pravritti marga* is the path of extroversion, of losing one's identity, and *nivritti marga* is the path of introversion, of identifying oneself. According to the laws of nature, as one becomes involved in worldly matters and proceeds further on the sensorial path, one moves further on pravritti marga and loses consciousness of the real self. This is experienced in daily life.

As long as one remains within the limits of society there is always a material life to maintain and support: one needs food to eat, clothes to wear and a house to live in. These needs occupy the mind when getting up in the morning and even when sleeping at night. One becomes so involved in the daily routine activities that there is no time for activities that

bring peace and self-satisfaction. This leads to mental and emotional disorders and the manifestation of afflictions.

When these limitations are finally put aside and another path adopted in a different scenario to help one to realize one's inner need, there is the thought, "I have just been running around for the past twenty-five years, working tirelessly like a bull for property, family happiness, status and prestige. Every morning I would rush to the office, and all the time, it was creating tension within me."

An awareness dawns at this time. The knowledge comes that the actions that were being performed were the karmas of pravritti marga, and self-satisfaction cannot be gained from them. At this point one can start discovering the way and means to self-realization. A path can be adopted, whether it is some type of spiritual work, the path of bhakti, worship, faith, charitable work, visiting holy places or the path of surrendering oneself to the guru. It begins to be seen that in this new life one's inner needs are gradually being fulfilled. Understanding begins, and then one starts to see oneself, to identify oneself, and in this way fulfilment begins.

When that inner realization takes place, there is the inspiration to proceed on nivritti marga. This understanding is accompanied by the final decision that whatever work had to be done in society has been completed, and that now one no longer has to do anything for oneself or for one's life. When proceeding on nivritti marga, the path to self-identification, and when worldly matters are discarded by means of self-analysis and awareness, then mental and emotional development take place inside and a state of internal balance is maintained. Gradually one starts to recognize one's real form and to progress further on that path which culminates in the state of samadhi.

The final oblation or culmination is known as samadhi. Various practices, processes, techniques or sadhanas are used in order to achieve that state. So from this point of view, the final limit of nivritti marga is samadhi, where one gets to know one's inner self.

It is difficult to define samadhi, because everyone has used different words to describe it. The same states which Sage Patanjali called nirbija, sabija, etc., have been given different names by Sage Gheranda: for example, laya siddhi samadhi or rasananda samadhi. However, by looking at the psychology of a human being, it can be inferred that one is a preliminary state of samadhi, leading to the next state.

Brahmajnana

In all the scriptures and texts, the state known as *brahmajnana*, realization or knowledge of *Brahman*, the all-pervading reality, is itself the state of samadhi. The word *brahman* comes from the root *vrihm*, which means to develop. As the consciousness develops, the knowledge and the new dimensions that one realizes are called brahmajnana. This can be understood by looking at *parajnana*, the highest transcendental knowledge, and *aparajnana*, knowledge with attributes or qualities.

By analyzing the scriptures, it can be seen that parajnana is also called brahmajnana. The *apara* stage is reached in the state of meditation, but when the *para* or the highest stage is entered, where name, form or thought have no significance, the states that are observed and faced there and the perceptions or knowledge that are gained are called brahmajnana, or supreme knowledge. That is called the dimension of samadhi, because one no longer remains suspended in an empty space, but continues moving towards the light. Sage Patanjali has called it *ritambhara prajna*, consciousness pregnant with *ritam*, cosmic truth. Its perception is the state of ritam. So the state of brahmajnana itself is called samadhi. This is the third point.

Samadhi in the Bhagavad Gita

The fourth point of view of samadhi is given in the *Bhagavad Gita* in answer to Arjuna's question. Arjuna asks Lord Krishna (2:54):

*Sthitaprajnasya kaa bhaashaa samaadhistasya keshava
Sthitadheeh kim prabhaasheta kimaaseeta vrajeta kim.*

What is the description of one who has a steady mind and is merged in the superconscious state? How does he speak, how does he sit, how does he walk?

Lord Krishna defines samadhi as a state in which one is liberated from bondage. In this state, worldly bondages such as likes and dislikes, greed and delusion, cunning and ignorance, no longer have any influence; the same attitude is maintained in every situation. In that equipoised state there is evenness of mind or indifference to both pleasure and pain, equal freedom in both good and bad situations. That state of samadhi is *atma shuddhi*, purity of the self.

This is also discussed in *Ramacharitamanas* and the Upanishads. The Shanti mantra of the *Ishavasya Upanishad* expresses the same feeling:

*Om poornamadah poornamidam poornaat poornamudachyate;
Poornasya poornamaadaaya poornamevaavashishyate.*

When fullness is taken from fullness, even then fullness remains. It does not become incomplete.

This feeling describes *brahma avastha*, the supreme state.

When one takes birth and assumes the form of an individual soul, then one is complete in that and has the capacity to recognize one's real basic form inside. When that recognition comes, one's own completeness is perceived. Even when one does not recognize oneself, one still remains complete.

Brahma vritti

In yoga, samadhi has also been identified as a form of a *vritti* or modification, called *brahmi vritti*. On the one hand, it is said that when all kinds of vritis and samskaras end, then the state of samadhi is attained. But then the state of samadhi

has also been given the name brahmi vritti, a modification, a condition, a state which always follows Brahman. Goswami Tulsidas has written in *Ramacharitamanas*:

*Go gochara jaham laga mana jaaee; so saba jaaneoo maayaa bhaaee.
Soi jaanai jehi dehu janaaee; jaanata tumhahi tumhai hoee jaayee.*

The senses and mind – to whatever extent they reach, it is all maya. When I was going to know you, then I became yours only.

Once a learned Mohammedan, was hit by an arrow. How was the arrow to be removed? People said, “When he sits in meditation and enters samadhi, then the arrow should be pulled out.” When he sat for *namaz*, prayer, and entered into samadhi, the arrow was indeed easily pulled out.

Here is another illustration. When a grain of salt enters the ocean, it does not come back; it forgets itself and merges with the ocean. Kabir says:

*Herata herata he sakhi gayaa kabeera heraaya;
Boonda samaanee samunda mem yasa kata heree jaya.*

In searching and searching, Kabir himself is lost; When a water drop enters the ocean, how can it be found?

The state of samadhi can be understood in this simple form.

Sage Gheranda speaks on samadhi in the following verses.

Verses 1-4

समाधिश्च परो योगो बहुभागेन लभ्यते ।
गुरोः कृपाप्रसादेन प्राप्यते गुरुभक्तितः ॥ 1 ॥
विद्याप्रतीतिः स्वगुरुप्रतीतिरात्मप्रतीतिर्मनसः प्रबोधः ।
दिने दिने यस्य भवेत्स योगी सुशोभनाभ्यासमुपैति सद्यः ॥ 2 ॥
घटाद्भिन्नं मनः कृत्वा चैक्यं कुर्यात्परात्मनि ।
समाधिं तं विजानीयान्मुक्तसंज्ञो दशादिभिः ॥ 3 ॥
अहं ब्रह्म न चान्योऽस्मि ब्रह्मैवाहं न शोकभाक् ।
सच्चिदानन्दरूपोऽहं नित्यमुक्तः स्वभाववान् ॥ 4 ॥

*Samaadhishcha paro yogo bahubhaagyena labhyate;
Guroh kripaaprasaadena praapyate gurubhaktitah. (1)*

*Vidyaaprateetih svaguruprateetiraatmaprateetirmanasah prabodhah;
Dine dine yasya bhavetsa yogee sushobhanaabhyaasamupaiti
sadyah. (2)*

*Ghataadbhinnam manah kritvaa chaikyam kuryaatparaatmani;
Samaadhim tam vijaaneeyaanmuktasanjño dashaadibhih. (3)*

*Aham brahma na chaanyo'smi brahmaivaaham na shokabhaak;
Sachchidaanandaroopo'ham nityamuktah svabhaavavaan. (4)*

Supreme yoga in the form of samadhi is attained by great good fortune. The only recipients are those who are the disciples of the guru and who receive the guru's grace. Only that yogi should be considered as a deserving candidate for the practice of samadhi who has knowledge and experience of (spiritual) education from the guru regarding the soul or self and whose awakening of mind increases day by day. A yogi is liberated by separating the mind from the body and making it one with the Supreme Self. This is samadhi, freedom from all (known) states of consciousness. I am not separate from Brahman, but I am Brahman only. I am not full of sorrow, but I am the form of truth-consciousness-bliss (satchidananda) and blessed with the nature of an eternally liberated soul.

Sage Gheranda says that samadhi is the highest yoga. It is not a simple practice. Not all practitioners can reach this high state. Only due to having some special qualities and as a result of guru's grace and blessings can one attain samadhi. In fact, this is essential for everything. If one wants to become a yogi, then one should have the qualities of a yogi. If one wants to steal, then one should have the qualities of a thief. If one wants to be non-violent, then one should have the qualities of non-violence. In the same manner, qualities are required in the life of a practitioner in order to achieve samadhi, and as long as the guru does not identify and develop these qualities, samadhi cannot be attained. As a sadhaka or practitioner one does not know oneself or one's qualities. It is only the guru who has the knowledge of which qualities are essential for samadhi and who gives guidelines to the disciples after having identified their personality, weaknesses and achievements.

Necessary qualities

The sadhaka should have firm faith in the science of yoga, and unlimited faith, respect and total surrender for the guru. Self-confidence is also essential. The capacity for mental perception should be sharp, *manasah prabodhah*, so that one is capable of listening to and receiving the inner voice. It is only under these circumstances and by the special grace of guru that the disciple can attain high yogic samadhi.

Sage Gheranda has underlined some essential qualities here. The first one is faith in the system or technique. Whichever technique is adopted should be practised continuously with faith and effort. It will not work if practised today, not practised tomorrow and then left altogether the day after tomorrow and only resumed again when remembered a month later.

It is a general rule of yoga that continuity is essential. One has to practise constant effort as a discipline, not according to one's own sweet will. Continuity or constant effort is possible only when there is full faith in the technique. Therefore,

Sage Gheranda says, *vidyaa prateetih*, whatever the method, technique or knowledge may be, one should have faith in it.

After this he says, *svaguru prateetih*, one should have faith in one's guru, because very often it is the qualities of the disciple that determine the type of direction the guru gives. Due to one's mentality one tries to understand those instructions on the intellectual level and often can see no justification for them, but those instructions are very useful for one's future. Also, if these instructions are followed only because one has intellectualized and thought about them, or if one is unable to understand their real purpose, then one also falls. If the guru in whom one has faith has taken a resolve to teach one something that will enable attainment, one should at least have enough trust to follow the instructions with faith and respect. This feeling also has the effect of awakening a sattwic attitude. In the state of surrender it is not a self-oriented egotistic attitude but a sattwic attitude which is awakened.

Atma prateetih, self-confidence, is essential. Lack of self-confidence is the symptom of a weak mind and personality. Having faith in oneself is necessary so that the mind and personality do not remain weak in any way. *Manasah prabodhah*, the mind should be made receptive. Here the 'mind' referred to is the antahkarana, the four aspects of mind. As long as the antahkarana is not receptive to higher states, no further progress will be made.

Thus, Sage Gheranda has described four qualities: faith in the technique or teaching, faith in the guru, faith in oneself and increasing the receptivity of the antahkarana. Only when one creates this condition in one's life can the guru guide one properly to reach the state of samadhi.

Ghataadbhinna manah kritvaa chaikyam kuryaat paraatmani means to separate the mind from the body or *ghata* and unite it with *paramatma*, the Supreme Self. In the state of samadhi, the soul or spirit is separated from the body. The soul has no connection or link with the body, senses, sensual pleasures, matter, name and form. An attitude of oneness

with paramatma, the Supreme Self, is created. Union of the individual or microcosmic consciousness with limitless existence or the macrocosmic consciousness takes place. This state is called samadhi.

Aham Brahma na chaanyo'smi, there is only one attitude or feeling in samadhi – that I am Brahman and nothing else than that. I do not have any kind of bondage, sorrow and pain. I am free from bondage. I am satchidananda. I am in the form of sat, chit and ananda. I am divine. I am always free, liberated and this is my nature, i.e. this is the nature of the soul or self, the *atma*.

The attitude which the sage has expressed here does not have any *dvaita*, duality, in it. If this attitude is fully awakened in one's life and these feelings are experienced with inner one-pointedness, then that is the state of *advaita*, non-duality, the state of inner awakening or the divine state. This divine state has been called the eternally free nature of the Supreme Self, *nityamuktah svabhaavavaan*. After this, Sage Gheranda describes six techniques or states of samadhi:

Verses 5–6

शाम्भव्या चैव भ्रामर्या खेचर्या योनिमुद्रया ।
ध्यानं नादं रसानन्दं लयसिद्धिश्चतुर्विधा ॥ 5 ॥
पञ्चधा भक्ति योगेन मनोमूर्च्छा च षड्विधा ।
षड्विधोऽयं राजयोगः प्रत्येकमवधारयेत् ॥ 6 ॥

Shaambhavyaa chaiva bhraamaryaa khecharyaa yonimudrayaa;
Dhyaanam naadam rasaanandam layasiddhishchaturvidhaa. (5)

Panchadhaa bhakti yogena manomoorchhaa cha shadvidhaa;
Shadvidho'yam raajayogah pratyekamavadhaarayet. (6)

Shambhavi and bhramari, khechari and yoni mudras respectively accomplish the four states of dhyana, nada, rasananda and laya siddhi. The fifth is bhakti yoga and manomoorcha is the sixth, constituting raja yoga. These six are now described.

In Sage Gheranda's teachings there are a total of six techniques for attaining the state of samadhi. In the first technique shambhavi mudra is practised. It is called dhyana yoga samadhi. The second is nada yoga samadhi, for which bhramari pranayama is essential. The third is known as rasananda samadhi and khechari is practised in it. Laya siddhi samadhi is the fourth samadhi and its success lies in yoni mudra. The fifth samadhi is bhakti yoga samadhi. The last technique is called manomoorcha samadhi. These six samadhis are included in the 'raja yoga' aspect of Sage Gheranda's tradition, and a sadhaka should practise them in a sequence. In this sequence he has described dhyana yoga samadhi first of all.

I. DHYANA YOGA SAMADHI

Verses 7-8

शाम्भवीं मुद्रिकाः कृत्वा आत्मप्रत्यक्षमानयेत् ।
 बिन्दु ब्रह्ममयं दृष्ट्वा मनस्तत्र नियोजयेत् ॥ 7 ॥
 खमध्ये कुरुचात्मानमात्ममध्ये च खं कुरु ।
 आत्मानं खमयं दृष्ट्वा न किञ्चिदपि बुध्यते ।
 सदानन्दमयो भूत्वा समाधिस्थो भवेन्नरः ॥ 8 ॥

*Shaambhaveem mudrikaah kritvaa aatmapratyakshamaanayet;
 Bindu brahmamayam drishtvaa manastatra niyojayet. (7)*

*Khamadhye kuruchaatmaanamaatmamadhye cha kham kuru;
 Aatmaanam khamayam drishtvaa na kinchidapi budhyate;
 Sadaanandamayo bhootvaa samaadhistho bhavennarah. (8)*

Adopting shambhavi mudra, see the atma, soul or self, and then perceiving Brahman, fix the mind in bindu. Merge the soul in the eternal space, merging the space with jivatma (the individual soul) and jivatma with Paramatma (the Supreme Self). With this the yogi becomes ever blissful and enters into samadhi.

In the first verse Sage Gheranda described the physical and mental aspects and how to approach the practices. In the second mantra he says, *Khamadhye kuruchaatmaanam aatmamadhye cha kham kuru*. The syllable *kha* or *kham* has been used extensively in the Vedas. *Kham* is a symbol for the space element. *Kham Brahman* means space itself is Brahman. The sage says that one should meditate on one's soul in the middle of the space element and meditate on the space element in the middle of one's soul.

Aatmaanam khamayam drishtvaa na kinchidapi budhyate, see oneself entering the space element, see oneself totally immersed in the space element. The feeling should be that the soul is coiled around the space element from all sides. One has to experience this kind of attitude.

Sadaanandamayo-bhootvaa samaadhistho bhavennarah, one will have the experience of inner bliss and samadhi.

This practice is similar to shoonya meditation, in which first of all one sits in a meditative posture and mentally empties the body completely. I am neither bone, nor flesh, blood nor skin, etc. It is just a hollow body, like a football filled with air; it is hollow inside. There is no solid matter inside it. In this shoonya meditation the body can also be imagined in the form of a skeleton or shell, and inside that, one meditates on the soul in the form of a *jyoti* or flame. The same technique is described here. It is necessary to maintain the attitude of hollowness, because by imagining that one's body is only a shell, consciousness is diverted from bone, flesh, marrow, internal organs and all else. The space element is seen pervading the entire inside of the body.

One becomes aware of the mental space, *chidakasha*. A luminous symbol is then observed by focusing the attention on that space element in *chidakasha*. That symbol could be a flame, a star, a white point, i.e. a symbol of brightness and light. With this practice a state gradually develops in which the body no longer appears to be a hollow shell, rather the whole body looks radiant.

This is a mental attitude. It can be regarded as the beginning of brahmi vritti. The body is no longer seen as it was previously. On the contrary, it is viewed in a different form, as space and soul, so that one's consciousness becomes subtle, subtler and then extremely subtle. With this attitude, with this awakening, one gradually starts experiencing the self inside.

When one starts experiencing the space element inside the body, it is a state of deep concentration, because the mind has become aware of the state of self by practising dharana in the material dimension, by withdrawing the mind from all kinds of passions and sensual pleasures and by bringing oneself into a state of shoonya meditation.

Space is an element which has no form. It is just a state or condition. The form, flow and touch of air can be experienced, but space cannot be experienced. How could it be experienced? Through vision? But vision is not the basis of space. Space itself has been considered as the basis of all other elements. Space is considered as a boundary line between the manifest and unmanifest worlds. All the other elements are capable of manifesting themselves inside space or ether. Body and consciousness merge in that infinite and endless space. Progressing from the apara or material dimension and entering the para or supreme dimension, the atma, soul or self, is experienced in the state of samadhi.

2. NADA YOGA SAMADHI

Verses 9–10

अनिलं मन्द वेगेन भ्रामरीकुम्भकं चरेत् ।
मन्दं मन्दं रेचयेद्वायुं भृङ्नादं ततो भवेत् ॥ 9 ॥
अन्तःस्थं भ्रमरीनादं श्रुत्वा तत्र मनो नयेत् ।
समाधिजायते तत्र चानन्दः सोऽहमित्यतः ॥ 10 ॥

*Anilam manda vegena bhraamareekumbhakam charet;
Mandam mandam rechayedvaayum bhrinnaadam tato bhavet. (9)*

*Antahstham bhramareenaadam shrutvaa tatra mano nayet;
Samaadhijaaryate tatra chaanandah so'hamityatah. (10)*

Taking the air in at a slow speed, doing bhramari pranayama, expel the air very slowly on exhalation. While exhaling, a sound similar to the humming of a black bee is produced. Wherever this nada (sound) is taking place, engage the mind there. This is (nada) samadhi arising with the bliss of 'I am That'.

Bhramari pranayama is the medium for this samadhi. Earlier, Sage Gheranda explained that bhramari pranayama should be practised by closing both the ears with the index fingers. Slowly breathe in and practise internal breath retention for as long as it is comfortable. After this a humming sound is to be produced while slowly exhaling and the mind is to be focused only on that sound.

Here Sage Gheranda says that by focusing the mind on the inner sound or *bhramara nada*, humming sound, for a longer duration, the antahkarana enters into the state of nada samadhi. The antahkarana is to be completely focused on the humming process of bhramari pranayama in nada samadhi. The entire mental faculty is to be totally immersed in it.

First one becomes aware of the gross sound and develops awareness of the vibrations of the sound. After this, one tries

to listen to the anahad nada. When one forgets the body, the experiences of the senses, all types of physical, intellectual, emotional and thinking processes, and focuses oneself in a nada, that nada is totally merged with the whole personality. It then assumes the form of a process just like ajapa. In the process of *ajapa*, mantra japa keeps going on continuously by itself in a natural way and there is no wilful control over it; it cannot be started or stopped at will. Exactly the same kind of condition prevails in nada samadhi.

Sage Gheranda says that once the mind is involved in nada, it forgets all kinds of impressions, is liberated from all kinds of experiences, eliminates external experiences and becomes fully absorbed in the inner sound. When the same sound starts humming in the entire body, then that is the state of nada samadhi, in which the knowledge of the self-created *Soham* sound is attained. As the mind crosses the state influenced by the three gunas and enters the field of nada, the state of consciousness is attracted to bindu. As one-pointedness becomes deep and consciousness is removed from all kinds of dissipations and focuses at one point, one has the living experience of nada; the spontaneous sound of *soham*, 'I am That', is heard.

3. RASANANDA SAMADHI

Verse 11

खेचरीमुद्रासाधनात् रसनोर्ध्वगता यदा ।
तदा समाधिसिद्धिः स्याद्धित्वा साधारणक्रियाम् ॥ 11 ॥

*Khechareemudraasaadhanaat rasanordhvagataa yadaa;
Tadaa samaadhisiddhih syaaddhitvaa sadhaaranakriyaam.*

When khechari mudra is performed and the tongue is folded upward, then by the practice of this simple yogic practice, samadhi is perfected.

Sage Gheranda says that in the practice of khechari the tongue is folded upward and backward, entering into the deeper nasal cavity, and with this, samadhi is perfected.

For this purpose the tongue must be long. In order to elongate the tongue a description of the techniques of *dohan*, milking, and *chedan*, cutting, are given for khechari mudra in Chapter 3.

With prolonged practice, when the tongue becomes long enough, it is said that *amrita*, nectar, flows from sahasrara. Excitement takes place in the region of the brahmarandhra and also in the extremities of the nerves and nadis in that area. As a result of this vibration and excitement, drops of nectar start flowing from sahasrara. They are received by the tip of the tongue. The taste experienced in that state is extremely blissful. At that time the yogi is so immersed in bliss that body consciousness is lost and one is liberated from the external experiences. The blissful samadhi attained through the juice of that nectar is *rasananda samadhi*.

4. LAYA SIDDHI SAMADHI

Verses 12–13

योनिमुद्रां समासाद्य स्वयं शक्तिमयो भवेत् ।
सुशृङ्गाररसेनैव विहरेत्परमात्मनि ॥ 12 ॥
आनन्दमयः सम्भूत्वा एक्यं ब्रह्मणि संभवेत् ।
अहं ब्रह्मेति चाद्वैतसमाधिस्तेन जायते ॥ 13 ॥

*Yonimudraam samaasaadya svayam shaktimayo bhavet;
Sushringaarararasenaiva viharetparamaatmani. (12)*

*Aanandamayah sambhootvaa ekyam brahmani sambhavet;
Aham brahmeti chaadvaitasamaadhistena jaayate. (13)*

Assuming yoni mudra, a yogi should create the feeling of shakti in himself and unite blissfully with Paramatma. Thereafter, established in blissful oneness, one becomes

one with Brahman and realizes 'I am Brahman'. This is non-dual samadhi (called laya siddhi yoga samadhi).

While describing laya siddhi, Sage Gheranda says that first of all yoni mudra should be practised and one should see oneself in the form of shakti, i.e. at that time the feeling that one is male or female has to be discarded. There does not remain any kind of distinction according to sex; one may be a child, young man, young lady, old man or old lady. One has to see oneself with this attitude in the form of shakti, and also have the conviction that there is only one purusha (male) in the universe; all the rest are females in the form of shakti.

Once Mirabai went to visit a saint. She sent the saint a message that she had come to see him. At this the saint sent a message back to her, saying that he did not meet with females. Mirabai laughed at this. She said, "I have learned today that another purusha (male) exists in the world, whereas previously I used to think there was only one purusha in the world – Krishna, and all remaining human beings were His shakti." When her reply reached the saint's ears, his eyes were opened and he accepted Mirabai as his guru. The same feeling or attitude which was noticed in Mira's life is seen here in the teachings of Sage Gheranda.

Everyone accepts that a *bhakta*, devotee, or a *sadhaka*, aspirant, worships God Almighty in some form or other. These are all different *bhavas*, attitudes or feelings, which are called *bhakti bhava*; the feeling of devotion. Some sadhakas or bhaktas worship the Lord in the form of a child. Some people meditate on the form of a lad, *thumaka chalata Raamachandra baajata paijaniyaam*. Some people look at the Lord in the form of a friend, *sakhya bhava*, or with *premi bhava*, the feeling of a lover, or as his servant, *dasya bhava*, others see him in the form of guru and worship him with the appropriate attitude and feelings, etc. All these feelings strengthen bhakti or devotion.

It is known that Surdas considered Krishna in the form of a boy and Uddhava took Him as a friend. Tulsidas accepted

Lord Rama as his master and himself as His servant. Mirabai accepted Lord Krishna as her lover. Thus different saints have expressed their faith in Him by their own feelings towards the Lord. In samadhi the same kind of situation or condition arises.

Sage Gheranda says, *Sushringaara rasenaiva vihareta Paramaatmani*. When something is dear to us, we decorate it and want to see it in a pleasing form. In childhood, dolls are played with. Every day there is a new feeling and so the doll's clothes and hairstyle are changed, and the doll is rocked with the feeling, "This is my doll". In the same way a feeling is awakened here that I might decorate and beautify my deity in whatever form I wish. However, this samadhi technique is suitable only for those sadhakas or aspirants who have already controlled their lower feelings and senses.

Each person has their own feelings. The inspiration may come from anywhere, but when there is a feeling of devotion, adorning the Lord is done on an inner form and one is totally lost in that. Just as a lady in love forgets everything for her lover, and because of that true love she is eventually successful in making him her own, aspirants or sadhakas are united with the limitless existence also on the strength of their feelings. No other knowledge except awareness of Brahman remains in the end. They are totally engrossed in bliss. This is the state of laya siddhi samadhi.

5. BHAKTI YOGA SAMADHI

Verses 14–15

स्वकीयहृदये ध्यायेदिष्टदेव स्वरूपकम् ।
चिन्तयेद्भक्तियोगेन परमाह्लादपूर्वकम् ॥ 14॥
आनन्दाश्रुपुलकेन दशाभावः प्रजायते ।
समाधिः सम्भवेत्तेन सम्भवेच्च मनोन्मनी ॥ 15॥

*Svakeeyahridaye dhyaayedishtadeva svaroopakam;
Chintayedbhaktiyogena paramaahlaadaapoorvakam. (14)*

*Aanandaashrupulakena dashaabhaavah prajaayate;
Samaadhih sambhavettena sambhavedchcha manonmanee. (15)*

In one's heart, with supreme delight and utmost devotion, one should think of the form of one's ishta deva or deity. With this come tears of sheer bliss, the body is thrilled, the mind becomes free of sensations, is one-pointed and experiences samadhi and manonmanee.

Sage Gheranda says that one has to meditate on the form of one's *ishta deva*, preferred or desired deity, in one's heart and create a feeling of surrender towards that deity with full faith, devotion, love and bliss through *chintan*, deep and sincere thinking. When the mind is absorbed in meditation on the deity, blissful tears start rolling down and as a result of this blissful experience the body starts trembling or shaking. Attaining this engrossed state, the sadhaka becomes merged with the deity and attains bhakti yoga samadhi.

Due to variations in the nature of human beings, the guru gives different instructions to different disciples at the time of meditation. Bhakti yoga is excellent for those people who are emotional or soft-hearted. Sometimes this kind of pure and tender feeling emerges in the form of an obstacle in worldly life. For example, if someone becomes extremely emotional at home, in the family, at work and in society, then people start wondering what has happened to him? Maybe he has become mentally unbalanced?

It is not an imbalance, but this feeling, whether it be due to sensitivity, tenderness of the heart or activation of the emotions, is sometimes seen as an obstacle when it emerges or surfaces in the world. In yoga, however, there is the belief that when the feeling or attitude is channelled in the right direction, it can become a way of attaining samadhi. It is in this context that Sage Gheranda is discussing bhakti yoga samadhi, a technique prescribed for emotional people. It says that one should meditate on one's ishta in anahata chakra. When the mind is completely absorbed in the ishta, then the experience of faith, devotion, love and bliss takes place in one's life. When one is fully absorbed in that feeling, then one merges and becomes one with the deity, ishta.

In Chapter 3, dharana (concentration) was discussed while describing mudras. In different philosophies instructions are given to focus the mind or attention on one chakra. While focusing the mind on that chakra, one meditates on its *tattwa*, element, and also on the one form of the soul or Supreme Self.

It needs to be understood properly that here the discussion is on different states of samadhi, but the instructions which are given are actually for meditation. It has already been said that during dharana leading to meditation the form of consciousness should be like the flow of oil, that is, the flow should be regular and steady, so that it is continuous and unobstructed. A distressed or foolish state of any kind cannot intervene. In this state the mind cannot be involved in false knowledge at any time. When one enters into the state of meditation after perfecting the practices of pratyahara and dharana, then the process of making further progress in that state of meditation is the attainment of samadhi.

So the techniques which Sage Gheranda is describing here are not precisely an introduction to the state of samadhi. Actually they indicate how to proceed further in the state of meditation itself and in this way attain samadhi. In the first technique he said to practise shambhavi mudra and focus

the consciousness in the self. In the second state he said to practise nada yoga. In the third he said to practise khechari and so on. External directions have been given, but the sage has not defined the state of samadhi. His point of view is that one enters the state of samadhi by adopting a technique of deepening the consciousness in the state of meditation, and then obtains the result according to one's nature, attachment, internal bondage and *guna* or quality. But in the end even these have to be discarded or renounced.

In relation to bhakti yoga samadhi, Sage Gheranda also says that when one meditates on the ishta in one's heart centre or anahata chakra and forgets oneself completely, letting oneself flow with the feeling, then at that time the body starts vibrating, tears of love and affection start flowing and one loses consciousness. In this state one becomes one with the ishta. This is the state of bhakti yoga samadhi.

6. MANOMOORCHHA SAMADHI

Verse 16

मनोमूर्च्छा समासाद्य मन आत्मनि योजयेत् ।
परमात्मनः समायोगात्समाधिं समवाप्नुयात् ॥ 16॥

*Manomoorchchham samaasaadya mana aatmani yojayet;
Paramaatmanah samaayogaatsamaadhim samavaapnuyaat.*

Practising manomoorchha kumbhaka, making the mind one-pointed, the yogi should meditate on atman, thus the union with Paramatma (Supreme Self) is attained in samadhi.

Manomoorchha means the mind becoming 'unconscious'. What happens in the state of unconsciousness? Knowledge of the body and knowledge of the thinking process is lost. Just as one may go into a coma externally, in exactly the same way, when the mind becomes unconscious, the entire activity

of the antahkarana is stopped. At that time only prana shakti remains in an awakened state inside and conducts all the activities.

In order to stop the activities of the mind, pranayamas and particularly *kumbhaka*, breath retention, are practised in yoga. Even in the normal state, if breath retention is performed forcibly, there will be a slight feeling of dizziness or maybe a headache and the head becomes light. In this state the mental activities gradually reduce and finally stop completely. This is the final outcome of breath retention.

For this practice to have positive results it is imperative to have mastery over breath retention. When breath retention is perfected, the mind becomes stable and enters the disciplined state of antahkarana, which is here named manomoorchha samadhi. In this state the antahkarana does not run after external materialistic things, but becomes absolutely one-pointed, and at that time unconsciousness of the external world is experienced.

After attaining this state, an effort should be made to unite one's mind and inner consciousness, atma, with the Supreme Self, Brahman or Paramatman. When that union with the Supreme Self takes place, then that is 'samadhi'.

A technique of breath retention which can be practised in the state of meditation to make the antahkarana stable and one-pointed is referred to here. If one tries to understand it as a yogic practice, it can be said to be a technique of raja yoga, and the attainment of this state is possible only by controlling the mind.

Prolonged practise of moorcha pranayama, as described in Chapter 5, prepares the body and psyche for spontaneous entry into meditation. As the practice is perfected kumbhaka becomes extended and effortless, and with the mind focused on Brahman one enters manomoorcha samadhi.

SAMADHI YOGA MAHATMYA

Verses 17–23

इति ते कथितं चण्ड समाधिर्मुक्तिलक्षणम् ।
राजयोगः समाधिः स्यादेकात्मन्येव साधनम् ।
उन्मनी सहजावस्था सर्वे चैकात्मवाचकाः ॥ 17 ॥
जले विष्णुः स्थले विष्णुर्विष्णुः पर्वतमस्तके ।
ज्वालामालाकुले विष्णुः सर्वं विष्णुमयं जगत् ॥ 18 ॥
भूचराः खेचराश्चामी यावन्तो जीवजन्तवः ।
वृक्षगुल्मलतावल्लीतृणाद्याः वारि पर्वताः ।
सर्वं ब्रह्म विजानीयात्सर्वं पश्यति चात्मनि ॥ 19 ॥
आत्मा घटस्थचैतन्यमद्वैतं शाश्वतं परम् ।
घटाद्विभिन्नतो ज्ञात्वा वीतरागं विवासनम् ॥ 20 ॥
एवं मिथः समाधिः स्यात्सर्वसंकल्पवर्जितः ।
स्वदेहे पुत्रदारादिबान्धवेषु धनादिषु ।
सर्वेषु निर्ममो भूत्वा समाधिं समवाप्नुयात् ॥ 21 ॥
तत्त्वं लयामृतं गोप्यं शिवोक्तं विविधानि च ।
तेषां संक्षेपमादाय कथितं मुक्तिलक्षणम् ।
वाचां संक्षेपमादाय कथितं मुक्ति लक्षणम् ॥ 22 ॥
इति ते कथितं चण्ड समाधि दुर्लभः परः ।
यं ज्ञात्वा न पुनर्जन्म जायते भूमि मण्डले ॥ 23 ॥

*Iti te kathitam chanda samaadhirnmuktilakshanam;
Raajayogah samaadhih syaadekaatmanyeva saadhanam;
Unmanee sahajaavasthaa sarve chaikaatmavaachakaah. (17)*

*Jale Vishnuh sthale Vishnurvishnuh parvatamastake;
Jvaalaamaalaakule Vishnuh sarvam Vishnumayam jagat. (18)*

*Bhoocharaah khecharaashchaamee yaavanto jeevajantavah;
Vrikshagulmalataarvalleetrinaadyaah vaari parvataah;
Sarvam brahma vijaaneeyaatsarvam pashyati chaatmani. (19)*

*Aatmaa ghatasthachaitanyamadvaitam shaashvatam param;
Ghataadvibhinnato jnaatvaa veetaraagam vivaasanam. (20)*

*Evam mithah samaadhih syaatsarvasankalpavarjitah;
Svadehe putradaaraadibaandhaveshu dhanaadishu;*

Sarveshu nirmamo bhootvaa samaadhim samavaapnuyaat. (21)

*Tattvam layaamritam gopyam shivoktam vividhaani cha;
Teeshaam sankshepamaadaaya kathitam muktilakshanam;
Vaachaam sankshepamaadaaya kathitam mukti lakshanam. (22)*

*Iti te kathitam chanda samaadhi durlabhah parah;
Yam jnaatvaa na punarjanma jaayate bhoomi mandale. (23)*

O Chanda! Thus I have explained samadhi as a symbol of liberation (mukti). This is raja yoga samadhi, synonymous with the attainment of union with atma gained in the unmani sahaja (spontaneous no-mind) states. Indeed these should be understood as samadhi.

Lord Vishnu is in water, Vishnu is in the earth, Vishnu is on the mountain top and Vishnu is in the flames of fire. Thus this entire universe is indeed pervaded by Lord Vishnu. All living creatures that move on the earth or in the sky, trees, bushes, creepers, grass, oceans, mountains, etc., of this animate and inanimate universe are all Brahman. A yogi sees everyone in the self and the self in everyone. Considering the conscious eternal soul, atma chaitanya, or self inside the body as separate from the body, one becomes free from worldly attachments and passions.

Thus, leaving aside all attachments with the body, son, wife, relations, wealth and possessions, attain samadhi. This layamrita tattwa (essence immersed in nectar) has been declared by Lord Shiva. This should be understood as a brief on liberation or salvation, which is difficult to attain. O Chanda! Knowing this samadhi, one is not reborn in this earthly dimension.

Concluding his teachings, the sage tells his disciple that he has described all those techniques pertaining to the science of samadhi, by which salvation can be attained in the state of meditation. Here he is disclosing his secret. He has described only those techniques which, when practised

in combination with meditation, make the attainment of samadhi possible. This high grade of meditation can only be practised with a spontaneous natural feeling and it should be practised in the unmani state.

Unmani

Unmani is a mudra, or gesture, which reflects the feeling of one-pointedness, and in that attitude of one-pointedness sometimes a divine attitude is observed. Therefore, this high grade of meditation should be practised along with unmani mudra, and it should be practised in a natural state without any show or display. When this simple and natural state is achieved, then samadhi is attained by uniting the atma, the individual soul, with paramatma, the Supreme Soul, by means of any yogic practice.

In relation to unmani, meditation here is on the nosetip. When the mind or attention is focused on the nosetip, then the state of unmani dawns. In kundalini yoga *nasikagra drishti*, nosetip gazing, has a special significance. Kundalini yogis believe that there is a small energy centre or sub-psychic centre in the nosetip, which has a link with both mooladhara and ajna chakras. This means that when the gaze is fixed at the nosetip all the experiences preserved in the psychic centres from mooladhara to ajna can be activated and kundalini can awaken.

In this state of unmani mudra the receptivity of chitta is activated. This sensitivity of consciousness becomes strong, making it easy to enter into a subtle state from the gross or physical state, and thence from the subtle into the causal state. Once this state of consciousness is attained, it is a good time to practise meditation.

The aim

Sage Gheranda says that the aim of attaining samadhi should not be restricted to the meditative state only. Rather, it is imperative to always keep in mind that the individual soul is united with Brahman. In other words, one's aim or

objective should not be lost. If the aim is self-realization, then that objective should be the background of the mind twenty-four hours a day, not only brought to mind during yoga sadhana.

Even in normal life this should be so, but instead, when a person goes to the office or elsewhere to work, there is only one thing at the back of the mind – the pay cheque and other rewards for that work. Just as the desire for a reward is always in the mind of a materialist, one's aim or inner desire should always be present. Do not think, "Enlightenment is not possible right now, so I will put aside that objective and enjoy my life for fifteen or twenty years." Even in the daily situations one's aim should not be forgotten.

Sage Gheranda says it should constantly be remembered that the Lord exists in everything, in the animate and inanimate worlds. Verse 18 puts this very well:

*Jale Vishnuh sthale Vishnurvishnuh parvatamastake;
Jvaalaamaalaakule Vishnuh sarvam Vishnumayam jagat.*

The energy that is pervading this entire world should be felt in water, on earth, on the mountain tops, in forests, in every living being, in all matter of the animate and inanimate universe. When that energy is experienced, the mind does not lose sight of the objective. It should also be understood that everyone's soul or spirit is part of that eternal Supreme Self, Paramatma or Ishwara. All living things: human beings, birds, other creatures, trees, flowers, fruits, along with the 'non-living' things like water, mountains, etc., of this world serve as the abode of that Paramatma.

Lord Vishnu

Sage Gheranda has mentioned the name of Lord Vishnu. Brahma is the creator, Vishnu is the preserver and Mahesha (Lord Shiva) is the destroyer. All living beings from the smallest to the greatest are preserved or maintained by Lord Vishnu, and Sage Gheranda asks that Vishnu be seen pervading the entire universe. Vishnu is to be seen as the

preserving energy, who maintains now and in the future. He is the energy on which everything, animate and inanimate, is dependent for its existence and condition.

There is no dependence on Brahma because he has already created us. There is no dependence on Shiva because destruction or dissolution is going to take place after quite some time. However, there is always dependence on Vishnu, because every moment, from birth to death, he is behind whatever work is going on to support and continue creation. That is why in this verse Vishnu's name has been used to celebrate that the universe itself is Vishnu and Vishnu himself is the universe.

However, everything in this world is perishable. There is only one form of existence which is not destructible and that is the *atma* or soul. The soul is immortal, eternal; the body is transitory. If one identifies oneself permanently with the immortal and eternal nature of the soul, then that true knowledge itself enables one to renounce all desires and become free from bondage. When all things are perishable, then with whom are one's attachments? Remaining attached to something destructible is the greatest form of ignorance.

There is a story about Sage Lomesh. Once Lord Indra became proud, thinking that he had become king of the gods due to the glory of his virtuous deeds. Lord Vishnu decided to crush his pride. He called Indra to his abode, Vaikuntha. While they were busy talking, Indra saw a line of ants moving in a corner. He enquired, "Lord, how have these ants managed to come to your *loka*, dimension, and enter Vaikuntha? Lord Vishnu told him that once upon a time all these ants were also Indras, but when their accumulated virtue was exhausted by their chasing pleasure and position, they had declined and were reborn as ants. Indra said that he did not understand, so Lord Vishnu told him that the glory of accumulated virtues alone opens the door to heaven and salvation.

There is a difference between the general and the yogic definitions of virtue and sin. In yoga, giving donations to charity and doing good deeds is not considered to be

punya, virtue; that is external conduct. When inner positive modifications or qualities are awakened, it is called virtue. However, when one becomes lost in those same qualities and starts running after name, fame and status, the virtues are finished. This was explained to Indra, but Indra did not understand. So Lord Vishnu told Indra to go and visit Lord Lomesh (*lomesh* means one who has an overgrowth of hair on his body) and ask him to explain.

When Indra went to Lord Lomesh, he noticed that there was a spot on the sage's hand where there was not a single hair. At this, he forgot his original question and instead asked the sage why there was no hair on this one spot while the rest of his body was covered in hair, and also why he was wandering here and there? Indra suggested that if he had built a small hut for himself, lived there and practised meditation, etc., his life would have been fruitful.

Sage Lomesh answered by saying, "What would I gain by building a hut? What would I gain by collecting disciples? My lifespan is so brief, why should I put myself in this kind of bondage and attachment? This is why I have not made a hermitage for myself. As regards the hair on my body, let me tell you that when one Brahma expires, one hair from my body falls and the number of hairs that have fallen shows the number of times Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh have died."

Indra was very surprised to learn that even Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh die. He again rushed to Lord Vishnu to learn the meaning of this. The Lord then explained to him that whoever comes (takes birth) has to go (die) as well. One also dies and is reborn. Lord Krishna refers to this when explaining spiritual life to Arjuna (*Bhagavad Gita*, 4:5):

*Bahooni me vyateetaani janmaami tava chaarjuna;
Taanyaham veda sarvaani na tvam vettha parantapa.*

Many births of mine and yours also have passed Arjuna;
I know them all but you don't know them, O scorcher
of foes.

We are born many times and die many times, but when this great trinity is dissolved, then neither Indra nor any one else except Lomeshwara remains and survives. Nature has made a rule based on his hair, that creation will go on until there are no hairs left on his body. On hearing this, Indra's eyes opened.

Let us look at the underlying meaning of this fable. Sage Lomesh knows that in reality he has a short lifespan and has to die one day, so why should he become involved in attachments? However, he has the longest lifespan of all, having already seen hundreds of trinities take birth and pass away, and being destined to see more in the future.

Sage Gheranda says it is the same with samadhi: it is imperative to have the attitude of non-attachment and asceticism. Only those who are not attached to wealth, property, wife, children, friends, relatives and even their own body or mind in any way can experience the state of samadhi. They must have vairagya bhava within, without any kind of mental tension. Only when the mind is free from pleasure and pain, and there is no antahkarana, can one merge with Brahman. Thinking of attaining samadhi without vairagya is just like building castles in the air. Education in this true knowledge is imparted by Sage Gheranda to his disciple, King Chandakapali.

Iti te kathitam chanda samaadhi durlabhah parah, O Chanda! I have told you about the science of samadhi, which is hard to attain and is not accessible to everyone. *Yajjnaatvaa cha purnajanma jaayate bhoomimandale*, one is not reborn after having attained this state.

The cause of rebirth is desire, and when a person has no desire in the state of samadhi, there is no antahkarana, one has merged oneself. Then the question of birth and death does not arise; one achieves one's aim or objective at this point only. In a way, it can be said that this is the secret of the science of yoga.

Appendices

Psychic Physiology of Yoga

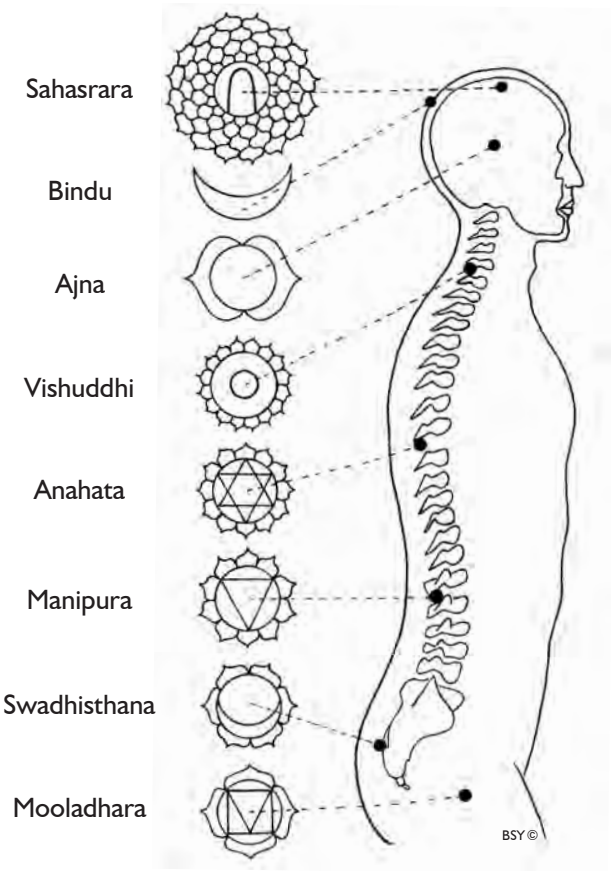
In order to gain the maximum benefit from yogic practices, it is necessary to concentrate on something. By directing the mind to a specific region of the body or to the breath, the effect of a particular practice is increased. In some of the practices described in this book, *chakras* or psychic centres have been used as a point for spiritual concentration.

On a physical level, the chakras are associated with the major nerve plexuses and endocrine glands in the body. In yogic language, chakras are vortices of pranic energy at specific areas in the body which control the circulation of prana permeating the entire human structure. Each chakra is also a switch which turns on or opens up specific areas of the brain. In most people these chakras lie dormant and inactive. Concentration on the chakras while performing yogic practices stimulates the flow of energy through the chakras and helps to activate them. This in turn awakens underdeveloped areas in the brain and the corresponding faculties in the mental and psychic bodies, allowing one to experience higher planes of consciousness which are normally inaccessible.

There are seven major chakras, which are located along the pathway of sushumna, which flows through the centre of the spinal cord. Sushumna originates at mooladhara chakra (the perineum) and terminates at sahasrara at the top of the head. The chakras are connected to a network of

psychic channels called *nadis*, which in some ways correspond to the nerves but are more subtle in nature. The chakras are depicted symbolically as lotus flowers, each having a particular number of petals and a characteristic colour. The lotus symbolizes the three stages the aspirant must pass through in spiritual life: ignorance, aspiration and illumination. It represents spiritual growth from the lowest state of awareness to the highest state of consciousness.

The petals of the lotus, inscribed with the *bija mantras* or seed sounds of the Sanskrit alphabet, represent the different



Location of the Chakras

manifestations of psychic energy connected with the chakras and the nadis leading into and out of them. Within each chakra is a *yantra*, comprised of the geometric symbol of its associated element and bija mantra. Within the yantra there is a presiding deity, which represents particular aspects of divinity, along with its corresponding *vahana* or vehicle, which is an animal form, representing other psychic aspects related with the particular centre.

Description of the seven chakras

Mooladhara chakra: The lowest of the chakras is situated at the perineum in the male body and at the cervix in the female body. The word *mool* means 'root' and *adhara* means 'place'; therefore, it is known as the root centre. Mooladhara chakra is associated with the sense of smell and the anus. It is symbolized by a deep red lotus with four petals. In the centre is a yellow square, the yantra of *prithvi tattwa*, the earth element, and the bija mantra *Lam*. In the centre of the square is a red triangle, the symbol of *shakti* or creative energy, with its apex pointing downward. Within the triangle is the smoky coloured *swayambhu linga*, symbolizing the astral body. A red serpent, representing the dormant kundalini, is coiled three and a half times around the linga. The red triangle is supported by an elephant with seven trunks, which symbolizes the stability and solidarity of the earth.

Mooladhara chakra is the seat or dwelling place of primal energy, *kundalini shakti*. Kundalini is the serpent coiled in deep slumber around the swayambhu linga. It is the source of all energy in humankind and the universe, whether sexual, emotional, mental, psychic or spiritual. While this energy is one, it takes on various qualities and attributes, depending on the psychic centre through which it manifests. The aim of yoga is to awaken the dormant kundalini through self-purification and concentration of mind and to lead it up through the chakras to sahasrara where, as pure energy or Shakti, it unites with pure consciousness, Shiva.

For concentration on mooladhara chakra, visualize the red inverted triangle or the yellow square, symbols of energy and solidity, to enhance inner stability and balance.

Swadhisthana chakra: Approximately two fingers' width above mooladhara chakra, in the spine is the concentration point for swadhisthana chakra. The literal meaning of the word *swadhisthana* is 'one's own abode'. The Sanskrit word *swa* means 'self' and *sthan* means 'dwelling place'. This chakra is symbolized by a crimson lotus with six petals. In the centre is a white crescent moon, the yantra of *apas tattwa*, the water element, and the bija mantra *Vam*. The crescent moon yantra and the bija mantra are riding on a crocodile, symbolizing the underlying movement of the karmas.

Swadhisthana chakra is associated with seeking pleasure and security. It is associated with the tongue and genital organs. In swadhisthana the emphasis is on overcoming fear, and on enjoyment, on pleasurable sensations and sexual interaction. When swadhisthana becomes active, it may manifest as overwhelming desires or cravings.

On a deeper level, swadhisthana is the seat of the individual and collective unconscious; it is the storehouse of all *samskaras*, past mental impressions stored in the form of archetypes. It is the centre of humankind's most primitive and deep-rooted instincts. By purifying this centre, the animal nature is transcended. For concentration on this centre, visualize a vast, deep ocean with dark waves beneath a night sky. The tides of the ocean represent the ebb and flow of awareness.

Manipura chakra: Situated in the spine behind the navel is manipura chakra. The word *mani* means 'gem' and *pura* means 'city'. Therefore, *manipura* means 'city of jewels'. It is so called because, being the fire centre, it is lustrous like a jewel and radiant with vitality and energy. This chakra is depicted as a bright yellow lotus with ten petals. Within the lotus is a fiery red triangle, the yantra of *agni tattwa*, the fire element, and the bija mantra *Ram*. The animal which serves as the vehicle for manipura is the ram, the symbol of assertiveness and energy.

Manipura is the centre of self-assertion, dynamism and dominance. It is associated with vision and the feet, with ambition and the will and ability to rule. On the negative side, this may be expressed in despotism and in seeing things and people merely as a means to gain personal power or to satisfy personal needs.

The solar plexus is the centre chiefly concerned with the vital process of digestion and food metabolism. It governs the functioning of the gastric glands, the pancreas, gall bladder and so on, which produce and secrete enzymes, acids and juices necessary for the digestion and absorption of nutrients. Manipura chakra is the psychic centre which controls these activities and the instinctive drive to find food and nurture oneself.

The adrenal glands located above the kidneys are also related with manipura. They secrete adrenaline into the blood during an emergency situation. This has the effect of speeding up all the physiological processes, making the mind sharp and alert, the heart beat faster, the respiration rate more rapid and so on. The body is then prepared for a more intense level of activity than normal in what is commonly called the 'fight or flight' response. Those people who suffer from sluggishness and depression or malfunctions of the digestive system, such as diabetes and indigestion, should concentrate on manipura chakra and try to feel energy radiating from this region.

For concentration on this centre, visualize the blazing sun or a ball of fire. Experience energy in the form of light radiating from this region and permeating the whole body.

Anahata chakra: Situated in the spine, behind the sternum, level with the heart, is anahata chakra. The word *anahata* literally means 'unstruck'. All sound in the manifested universe is produced by the striking together of two objects, which sets up vibrations or sound waves. However, the primordial sound, which issues from beyond this material world, is the source of all sound and is known as *anahad nada*, the unstruck sound. The heart centre is where this sound

manifests. It may be perceived by the yogi as an internal, unborn and undying vibration, the pulse of the universe.

This chakra is symbolized by a blue lotus with twelve petals. In the centre of the lotus is a hexagon, formed by two interlacing triangles. This is the yantra of *vayu tattwa*, the air element. The bija mantra is *Yam* and the vehicle is a swift black antelope, the symbol of alertness. Anahata chakra is the centre associated with the sense of touch (feeling), the hands (giving and taking), and emotions, ranging from the narrow attachments of jealousy to unconditional love. As this level is purified, the feelings of universal fellowship and tolerance begin to develop and all beings are accepted and loved for what they are.

On the physical level, anahata is associated with the heart and lungs, and the circulatory and respiratory systems. For meditation on anahata chakra, visualize a blue lotus or a blue hexagon, formed by two interlacing triangles, with a tiny, bright flame burning at the centre. Imagine it to be steady and unflickering like a flame in a windless place. This is the symbol of the *jivatma*, the individual soul, the indwelling spirit of all beings which is undisturbed by the winds of the world.

Vishuddhi chakra: Situated at the back of the neck, behind the throat pit, is vishuddhi chakra, the centre of purification. The word *shuddhi* means 'purification' and the prefix *vi* enhances this quality. It is symbolized by a violet lotus with sixteen petals. In the centre of the lotus is a white circle, the yantra of *akasha tattwa*, the ether element, and the bija mantra is *Ham*. The animal related to vishuddhi chakra is a white elephant. Right understanding and discrimination develop at vishuddhi chakra. Here the dualities of life are accepted, allowing one to flow with life and let things happen as they will.

Vishuddhi chakra governs the ears and the vocal cords, the region of the larynx, and the thyroid and parathyroid glands. It is the centre related with communication. The throat centre is the place where the divine nectar called

amrita, the mystical elixir of immortality, is tasted. This nectar is a kind of sweet secretion which is produced at bindu chakra and then falls down to vishuddhi where it is purified and processed for further use throughout the body.

For concentration on this centre, visualize a large white drop of nectar. Try to experience icy cold drops of sweet nectar falling down to vishuddhi, giving a feeling of blissful intoxication.

Ajna chakra: Situated in the midbrain, behind the eyebrow centre, at the top of the spine is ajna chakra. This centre is also known by various names such as: the third eye; *jnana chakshu*, the eye of wisdom; *triveni*, the confluence of three rivers; guru chakra and the eye of Shiva. The word *ajna* means 'command'. In deeper states of meditation the disciple receives commands and guidance from the guru, and from the divine or higher self, through this chakra.

Ajna chakra is depicted as a silver lotus with two petals, which represent the sun and the moon, or *pingala*, the positive force, and *ida*, the negative force. These two pranic flows, which are responsible for the experience of duality, converge at this centre with *sushumna*, the spiritual force. In the centre of the lotus is the sacred bija mantra *Aum*. The element of this chakra is the mind. This is the centre where wisdom and intuition develop. When ajna is awakened, the mind becomes steady and strong, and full control over prana is gained.

Ajna corresponds to the pineal gland, which has almost atrophied in the adult human being. On the psychic plane, this point is the bridge between the mental and psychic dimensions. Therefore, ajna chakra is responsible for supramental faculties such as clairvoyance, clairsaudience and telepathy.

Thought is also a very subtle form of energy. When ajna chakra is awakened, it is possible to send and receive thought transmission through this centre. It is like a psychic doorway opening into deeper and higher realms of awareness. Stimulating ajna chakra develops all the faculties of the mind, such as intelligence, memory and concentration.

For concentration on ajna chakra, the point of *bhruvadhya* at the eyebrow centre is used. Visualize a tiny point of light or an *Aum* symbol at this centre and let the thoughts dwell on the inner guru.

Bindu: At the top of the back of the head, where Hindu brahmins grow a small tuft of hair, is a point known as bindu. The word *bindu* means ‘point’ or ‘drop’. Bindu is symbolized by a tiny crescent moon on a dark night. Bindu is the centre of *nada*, psychic sound. This centre is used for concentration on the psychic sounds that may manifest there in practices such as *bhramari* pranayama and *shamukhi* mudra, which are used to develop the awareness of *nada*.

Sahasrara: Situated at the crown of the head is *sahasrara*, the abode of highest consciousness. The word *sahasrara* means ‘one thousand’. *Sahasrara* is visualized as a shining lotus of a thousand petals, containing the fifty letters of the Sanskrit alphabet twenty times over. In the centre of the lotus is a shining *gyotirlinga*, lingam of light, symbol of pure consciousness. In *sahasrara* the mystical union of Shiva and Shakti takes place, the fusion of consciousness with matter and energy, the individual soul with the Supreme Soul. When *kundalini* awakens, it ascends through the chakras to *sahasrara* and merges into the source from whence it originated. Matter and energy merge into pure consciousness in a state of intoxicating bliss. Having attained this, the yogi gains supreme knowledge and passes beyond birth and death.

Nadis

The word *nadi* literally means ‘flow’ or ‘current’. The ancient texts say that there are seventy-two thousand nadis in the psychic body. These are visible as currents of light to a person who has developed psychic vision. In recent times the word *nadi* has been translated as ‘nerve’, but actually nadis are blueprints for physical manifestation. Like the chakras, they are not actually part of the physical body, although they correspond with the nerves. Nadis are the

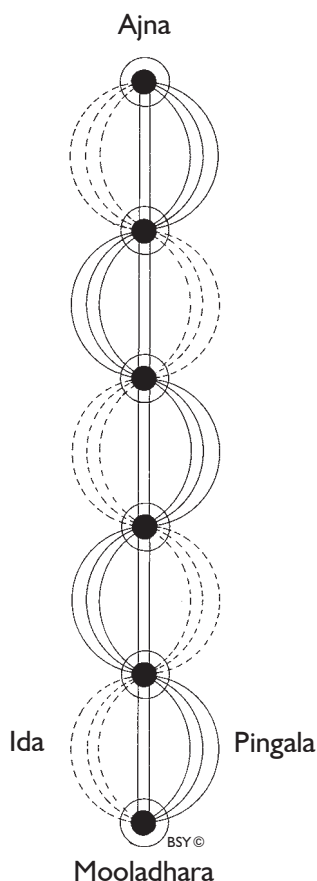
subtle channels through which the pranic forces flow. Out of the large number of nadis in the psychic body, there are ten major ones. Of these, three are most significant: ida, pingala and sushumna. The most important of these three is sushumna. All the nadis in the psychic body are subordinate to sushumna.

Ida, pingala and sushumna

Sushumna nadi is the spiritual channel, and to concentrate on it, awareness is taken to the centre of the spinal cord. Sushumna originates from mooladhara chakra and terminates at sahasrara. Ida nadi flows from the left side of mooladhara in spirals, passing through each chakra in turn, forming a criss-cross pathway which terminates at the left side of ajna chakra. Pingala nadi flows from the right side of mooladhara, mirroring ida, terminating at the right side of ajna. Ida and pingala represent the two opposite forces flowing within us. Ida is passive, introvert and feminine; it is also known as the *chandra* or moon nadi. Pingala, on the other hand, is active, extrovert and masculine, and is called the *surya* or sun nadi.

Pranic currents and the breath

These pranic currents, ida, pingala and sushumna, operate alternately. The current that is flowing at any particular time may be gauged by noting the flow of the breath in the nostrils. When the left nostril has a greater flow of air, then ida



nadi is predominant. When the flow is greater in the right nostril, then pingala is predominant. If the flow is equal, then sushumna is predominant. When the right nostril (pingala) flows, there is more vital energy for physical work, digestion of food and so on. The mind is extroverted and the body generates more heat. When the left nostril (ida) is flowing, mental energy is dominant. The mind is introverted and any kind of mental work may be undertaken. During sleep, ida nadi flows predominantly. If pingala flows at night, sleep will be restless and disturbed. Likewise, if ida flows while taking food, the digestive process may be slow, causing indigestion.

Altering the flow of nadis and breath

All activities are influenced by the flow of these nadis, which alternate approximately every sixty to ninety minutes. It is possible to alter the flow voluntarily by using yogic techniques such as asana and pranayama. For example, if ida nadi is flowing and there is physical work to be done, it is possible to redirect the flow of the breath to pingala nadi to obtain the necessary energy. On the other hand, one may adjust the activities to the energy flow.

To bring about a balance between ida and pingala, the two forces, the body must first be purified by the shatkarmas, the six cleansing practices. During the twenty-four hours of the day, the flow of ida should predominate for about twelve hours and the flow of pingala for the other twelve hours. When ida and pingala nadis are purified and balanced, and the mind is controlled, then sushumna, the most important nadi, begins to flow. Sushumna must be flowing for success in meditation. If pingala flows, the body will be restless; if ida flows, the mind will be overactive. When sushumna flows, kundalini awakens and rises through the chakras.

Nadis and the nervous system

At the physical level, ida and pingala correspond to the two aspects of the autonomic nervous system. Pingala coincides

with the sympathetic nervous system and ida with the parasympathetic nervous system. The sympathetic nervous system is responsible for the stimulation and acceleration of activities concerned with the external environment and the deceleration of the organs which tend to utilize a lot of energy internally. The sympathetic nerves speed up the heart, dilate the blood vessels, increase the respiration rate and intensify the efficiency of the eyes, ears and other sense organs. The parasympathetic nerves directly oppose the sympathetic nerves because they reduce the heartbeat, constrict the blood vessels and slow the respiration. This results in introversion. The flow of prana in ida and pingala is completely involuntary and unconscious until controlled by yogic practices.

Pancha koshas (five sheaths or bodies)

According to yoga there are five dimensions which coexist to make up the human body. Altogether, their field is from the grossest to the subtlest. They are called *pancha koshas* or five sheaths or bodies: annamaya kosha (physical sheath or body of matter), pranamaya kosha (energy sheath), manomaya kosha (mental sheath), vijñanamaya kosha (higher mental or intuitive sheath) and anandamaya kosha (sheath or body of bliss, beatitude).

Just as a generator makes a machine functional, in the same way *mahaprana* is a generator, which organizes and manages all these five koshas. Mahaprana enables these five koshas to perform their respective functions continuously, even in the state of sleep and even in the absence of continuous consciousness. Most people have their consciousness or awareness mainly at the physical level. Awareness of the subtler levels of one's existence can be developed through yogic and meditation practices like pranayama and prana vidya.

Annamaya kosha: This is the sheath or body of matter, so named due to its dependence on *anna* (food), water and air, which are gross forms of prana. However, its existence is

more dependent on the prana itself. It is possible to live for up to six weeks without food, without water for up to six days and without air for up to six minutes, but if prana leaves the body, life comes to an end immediately.

Pranamaya kosha: This is the energy body or *pranic* body. The pranic body is subtler than the physical body which it pervades and which it supports. The size and shape of the pranic body is similar to that of the physical body. The physical and pranic bodies combine to form the basic constitution of a human being. Sometimes it is also called *atmapuri* (the abode of the soul) because it is with these bodies which contain the more subtle, mental and causal bodies. If a person awakens subtle consciousness, it is possible to experience self-realization. It is suggested that one should gain more and more knowledge about the science of the pranic and physical bodies, i.e. human physiology, the *nava dwaras* (nine gates which include two eyes, two ears, two nostrils, mouth, anus and urinary tract) and the seven psychic centres or chakras.

Even at a cellular level, it enables the flow of prana in each cell of the physical body, but neither the pranic body nor the physical body can come into existence alone. Just as the physical body depends for its base and support on the pranic body, in the same way the pranic body is also supported by the still subtler manomaya, vijñanamaya and anandamaya koshas.

Manomaya kosha: This is the mental body. It conducts several activities together and maintains the two gross koshas, annamaya and pranamaya, in the form of a combined and coordinated unit. It plays the role of a messenger between these two bodies. It brings the experiences and sensations of the outside world to the inner body and the influences of the causal and inner bodies to the gross or physical body. The mind is capable of achieving maximum speeds. Thinking is the final expression of this. The mind can go forward and backward in time. Time is not a barrier in the path of the mind. In deep states of

meditation, it can be experienced that the very existence of time finishes.

Vijnanamaya kosha: This body of inner knowledge pervades manomaya kosha and is even more subtle. When this kosha is awakened, a person experiences life at the level of inner knowledge and starts understanding the reality hidden behind the manifested world. It awakens wisdom or intuition.

Anandamaya kosha: This is the subtlest of all the koshas. It is called the causal body referring to the dimension of bliss. It is the residing place or abode of the subtlest pranas. It is beyond all definitions.

Appendix B

Sanskrit Text

Prayer

आदीश्वराय प्रणमामि तस्मै, येनोपदिष्टा हठयोग विद्या ।
विराजते प्रोन्नतराजयोगमारोढुमिच्छोरधिरोहिणीव ॥

Chapter One

एकदा चण्डकापालिर्गत्वा घेरण्डकुट्टिरम् ।
प्रणम्य विनयाद्भक्त्या घेरण्डं परिपृच्छति ॥ 1 ॥

घटस्थयोगं योगेश तत्त्वज्ञानस्य कारणम् ।
इदानीं श्रोतुमिच्छामि योगेश्वर वद प्रभो ॥ 2 ॥

साधु साधु महाबाहो यन्मां त्वं परिपृच्छसि ।
कथयामि च ते वत्स सावधानोऽवधारय ॥ 3 ॥

नास्ति मायासमः पाशो नास्ति योगात्परं बलम् ।
नास्ति ज्ञानात्परो बन्धुर्नाहङ्कारात्परो रिपुः ॥ 4 ॥

अभ्यासात्कादिवर्णानां यथाशास्त्राणि बोधयेत् ।
तथा योगं समासाद्य तत्त्वज्ञानं च लभ्यते ॥ 5 ॥

सुकृतैर्दुष्कृतैः कार्यैर्जायते प्राणिनां घटः ।
घटादुत्पद्यते कर्म घटीयन्त्रं यथा भ्रमेत् ॥ 6 ॥

उर्ध्वाधोभ्रमतेयद्वत् घटीयन्त्रं गवां वशात् ।
तद्वत्कर्मवशाज्जीवो भ्रमते जन्ममृत्युभिः ॥ 7 ॥

आमकुम्भ इवाम्भस्थो जीर्यमाणः सदा घटः ।
योगानलेन संदह्य घटशुद्धिं समाचरेत् ॥8॥

शोधनं दृढता चैव स्थैर्यं धैर्यं च लाघवम् ।
प्रत्यक्षं च निर्लिप्तं च घटस्य सप्तसाधनम् ॥9॥

षट्कर्मणा शोधनं च आसनेन भवेद्दृढम् ।
मुद्रया स्थिरता चैव प्रत्याहारेण धीरता ॥10॥

प्राणायामाल्लाघवं च ध्यानात्प्रत्यक्षमात्मनः ।
समाधिना निर्लिप्तं च मुक्तिरेव न संशयः ॥11॥

धौतिर्वस्तिस्तथा नेतिः लौलिकी त्राटकं तथा ।
कपालभातिश्चैतानि षट्कर्माणि समाचरेत् ॥12॥

अन्तर्धौतिर्दन्तधौतिर्हृद्घौतिर्मूलशोधनम् ।
धौतिं चतुर्विधां कृत्वा घटं कुर्वन्ति निर्मलम् ॥13॥

वातसारं वारिसारं वह्निसारं बहिष्कृतम् ।
घटस्य निर्मलार्थाय ह्यन्तर्धौतिश्चतुर्विधा ॥14॥

काकचञ्चुवदास्येन पिबेद्वायुं शनैः शनैः ।
चालयेदुदरं पश्चाद्वर्त्मना रेचयेच्छनैः ॥15॥

वातसारं परं गोप्यं देह निर्मलकारकम् ।
सर्वं रोगक्षयकरं देहानलविवर्द्धकम् ॥16॥

आकण्ठं पुरयेद्वारि वक्त्रेण च पिबेच्छनैः ।
चालयेदुदरैर्णैव चोदराद्रेचयेदधः ॥17॥

वारिसारं परं गोप्यं देहनिर्मलकारकम् ।
साधयेत्तत्प्रयत्नेन देवदेहं प्रपद्यते ॥18॥

नाभिग्रन्थिं मेरुपृष्ठे शतवारं च कारयेत् ।
अग्निसारमियं धौतिर्योगिनां योगसिद्धिदा ॥19॥

उदरामयजं त्वक्त्वा जठराग्निं विवर्द्धयेत् ।
एषा धौतिः परा गोप्या देवानामपि दुर्लभा ।
केवलं धौतिमात्रेण देवदेहं भवेद्ध्रुवम् ॥20॥

काकीमुद्रां शोधयित्वा पूरयेदुदरं मरुत् ।
धारयेदर्धयामं तु चालयेदधोवर्त्मना ।
एषा धौतिः परा गोप्या न प्रकाश्या कदाचन ॥21॥

नाभिमग्नजले स्थित्वा शक्तिनाडीं विसर्जयेत् ।
कराभ्यां क्षालयेन्नाडीं यावन्मलविसर्जनम् ॥22॥

तावत्प्रक्षाल्य नाडीं च उदरे वेशयेत्पुनः ।
इदं प्रक्षालनं गोप्यं देवानामपि दुर्लभम् ।
केवलं धौतिमात्रेण देवदेहो भवेद् ध्रुवम् ॥23॥

यामार्धं धारणाशक्तिं यावन्न धारयेन्नरः ।
बहिष्कृतं महद्भौतिस्तावच्चैव न जायते ॥24॥

दन्तमूलं जिह्वामूलं रन्ध्रं च कर्णयुग्मयोः ।
कपालरन्ध्रं पञ्चेते दन्तधौतिर्विधीयते ॥25॥

खादिरेण रसेनाथ शुद्धमृत्तिकया तथा ।
मार्जयेद्दन्तमूलं च यावत्किल्बिषमाहरेत् ॥26॥

दन्तमूलं पराधौतिर्योगिनां योग साधने ।
नित्यं कुर्यात्प्रभाते च दन्तरक्षा च योगवित् ।
दन्तमूलं धावनादिकार्येषु योगिनां मतम् ॥27॥

अथातः सम्प्रवक्ष्यामि जिह्वाशोधन कारणम् ।
जरामरणरोगादीन्नाशयेद्दीर्घलम्बिका ॥28॥

तर्जनीमध्यमानामा अङ्गुलित्रययोगतः ।
वेशयेद्गलमध्ये तु मार्जयेल्लम्बिकामूलम् ।
शनैः शनैः मार्जयित्वा कफदोषं निवारयेत् ॥29॥

मार्जयेन्नवनीतेन दोहयेच्च पुनः पुनः ।
तदग्रं लोहयन्त्रेण कर्षयित्वा शनैः शनैः ॥30॥

नित्यं कुर्यात्प्रयत्नेन रवेरुदयकेऽस्तके ।
एवं कृते च नित्यं सा लम्बिका दीर्घतां व्रजेत् ॥31॥

तर्जन्यनामिका योगान्मार्जयेत्कर्णरन्ध्रयोः ।
नित्यमभ्यास योगेन नादान्तरं प्रकाशयेत् ॥32॥

वृद्धाङ्गुष्ठेन दक्षेण मार्जयेद्भालरन्ध्रकम् ।
एवमभ्यासयोगेन कफदोषं निवारयेत् ॥33॥

नाडी निर्मलतां याति दिव्यदृष्टिः प्रजायते ।
निद्रान्ते भोजनान्ते च दिवान्ते च दिने दिने ॥34॥

हृद्भौतिं त्रिविधां कुर्याद्दण्डवमनवाससा ॥35॥

रम्भादण्डं हरिद्दण्डं वेत्रदण्डं तथैव च ।
हन्मध्ये चालयित्वा तु पुनः प्रत्याहरेच्छनैः ॥36॥

कफं पित्तं तथा क्लेदं रेचयेदूर्ध्ववर्त्मना ।
दण्डधौतिविधानेन हृद्रोगं नाशयेद् ध्रुवम् ॥37॥

भोजनान्ते पिबेद्वारि चाकण्ठं पूरितं सुधीः ॥38॥

उर्ध्वा दृष्टिं क्षणं कृत्वा तज्जलं वमयेत्पुनः ।
नित्यमभ्यासयोगेन कफपित्तं निवारयेत् ॥39॥

चतुरङ्गुल विस्तारं सूक्ष्मवस्त्र शनैर्ग्रसेत् ।
पुनः प्रत्याहरेदेतत्प्रोच्यत धौतिकर्मकम् ॥40॥

गुल्म ज्वरप्लीहकुष्ठकफपित्तं विनश्यति ।
आरोग्यं बलपुष्टिश्च भवेत्तस्य दिने दिने ॥41॥

अपानक्रूरता तावद्यावन्मूलं न शोधयेत् ।
तस्मात्सर्वप्रयत्नेन मूलशोधनमाचरेत् ॥42॥

पीतमूलस्य दण्डेन मध्यमाङ्गुलिनाऽपि वा ।
यत्नेन क्षालयेद्गुह्यं वारिणा च पुनः पुनः ॥43॥

वारयेत्कोष्ठकाठिन्यमामाजीर्णं निवारयेत् ।
कारणं कान्तिपुष्ट्योश्च दीपनं वह्निमण्डलम् ॥44॥

जल वस्तिः शुष्कवस्तिर्वस्ती च द्विविधौ स्मृतौ ।
जल वस्तिं जले कुर्याच्छुष्कवस्तिं सदा क्षितौ ॥45॥

नाभिमग्नजले पायुन्यस्तनालोत्कटासनः ।
आकुञ्चनं प्रसारं च जल वस्तिं समाचरेत् ॥46॥

प्रमेहं च उदावर्तं क्रूरवायुं निवारयेत् ।
भवेत्स्वच्छन्ददेहश्च कामदेवसमो भवेत् ॥ 47 ॥

पश्चिमोत्तानतो वस्तिं चालयित्वा शनैः शनैः ।
अश्विनीमुद्रया पायुमाकुञ्चयेत्प्रसारयेत् ॥ 48 ॥

एवमभ्यासयोगेन कोष्ठदोषो न विद्यते ।
विवर्द्धयेज्जठराग्निमामवातं विनाशयेत् ॥ 49 ॥

वितस्तिमानं सूक्ष्मसूत्रं नासानाले प्रवेशयेत् ।
मुखान्निर्गमयेत्पश्चात् प्रोच्यते नेतिकर्मकम् ॥ 50 ॥

साधनान्नेतिकार्यस्य खेचरीसिद्धिमाप्नुयात् ।
कफदोषा विनश्यन्ति दिव्यदृष्टिः प्रजायते ॥ 51 ॥

अमन्दवेगेन तुन्दं भ्रामयेदुभपार्श्वयोः ।
सर्वरोगान्निहन्तीह देहानलविवर्द्धनम् ॥ 52 ॥

निमेषोन्मेषकं त्यक्त्वा सूक्ष्मलक्ष्यं निरीक्षयेत् ।
पतन्ति यावदश्रूणि त्राटकं प्रोच्यते बुधैः ॥ 53 ॥

एवमभ्यासयोगेन शाम्भवी जायते ध्रुवम् ।
नेत्ररोगा विनश्यन्ति दिव्यदृष्टिः प्रजायते ॥ 54 ॥

वातक्रमेण व्युत्क्रमेण शीत्क्रमेण विशेषतः ।
भालभातिं त्रिधा कुर्यात्कफदोषं निवारयेत् ॥ 55 ॥

इडया पूरयेद्वायुं रेचयेत्पिङ्गलया पुनः ।
पिङ्गलया पूरयित्वा पुनश्चन्द्रेण रेचयेत् ॥ 56 ॥

पूरकं रेचकं कृत्वा वेगेन न तु धारयेत् ।
एवमभ्यासयोगेन कफदोषं निवारयेत् ॥ 57 ॥

नासाभ्यां जलमाकृष्य पुनर्वक्त्रेण रेचयेत् ।
पायं पायं व्युत्क्रमेण श्लेष्मादोषं निवारयेत् ॥ 58 ॥

शीत्कृत्य पीत्वा वक्त्रेण नासानालविरचयेत् ।
एवमभ्यासयोगेन कामदेवसमो भवेत् ॥ 59 ॥

न जायते वार्द्धकं च ज्वरो नैव प्रजायते ।
भवेत्स्वच्छन्द देहश्च कफ दोषं निवारयेत् ॥60॥

Chapter Two

आसनानि समस्तानि यावन्तो जीवजन्तवः ।
चतुरशीति लक्षाणि शिवेन कथितानि च ॥ 1॥

तेषां मध्ये विशिष्टानि षोडशोऽनं शतं कृतम् ।
तेषां मध्ये मर्त्यलोके द्वात्रिंशदासनं शुभम् ॥ 2॥

सिद्धं पद्मं तथा भद्रं मुक्तं वज्रं च स्वस्तिकम् ।
सिंहं च गोमुखं वीरं धनुरासनमेव च ॥ 3॥

मृतं गुप्तं तथा मात्स्यं मत्स्येन्द्रासनमेव च ।
गोरक्षं पश्चिमोत्तानमुत्कटं सङ्कटं तथा ॥ 4॥

मयूरं कुक्कुटं कूर्मं तथा चोत्तानकूर्मकम् ।
उत्तानमण्डुकं वृक्षं मण्डुकं गरुडं वृषम् ॥ 5॥

शलभं मकरं चोष्ट्रं भुजङ्गं योगमासनम् ।
द्वात्रिंशदासनान्येव मर्त्ये सिद्धिप्रदानि च ॥ 6॥

योनिस्थानकमङ्घ्रिमूलघटितं संपीड्य गुल्फेतरम् ।
मेढ्रोपर्यथ सन्निधाय चिबुकं कृत्वा हृदि स्थापितम् ॥ 7॥

स्थाणुः संयमितेन्द्रियोऽचलदृशा पश्यन्भुवोरन्तरम् ।
ह्येतन्मोक्षकवाटभेदनकरं सिद्धासनं प्रोच्यते ॥ 8॥

वामोरूपरि दक्षिणं हि चरणं संस्थाप्य वामं तथा
दक्षोरूपरि, पश्चिमेन विधिना धृत्वा कराभ्यां दृढम् ।
अङ्गुष्ठौ हृदये निधाय चिबुकं नासाग्रमालोकयेत्
एतद्व्याधिविकारनाशनकरं पद्मासनं प्रोच्यते ॥ 9॥

गुल्फौ च वृषणस्याधोव्युत्क्रमेण समाहितः ।
पादाङ्गुष्ठौ कराभ्यां च धृत्वा वै पृष्ठदेशतः ॥ 10॥

जालन्धरं समासाद्य नासाग्रमवलोकयेत् ।
भद्रासनं भवेदेतत्सर्वव्याधिविनाशकम् ॥ 11॥

पायुमूले वामगुल्फं दक्षगुल्फं तथोपरि ।
समकायशिरोग्रीवं मुक्तासनं तु सिद्धिदम् ॥ 12 ॥

जङ्घाभ्यां वज्रवत्कृत्वा गुदापार्श्वे पदावुभौ ।
वज्रासनं भवेदेतद्योगिनां सिद्धिदायकम् ॥ 13 ॥

जानूर्वोरन्तरे कृत्वा योगी पादतले उभे ।
ऋजुकायसमासीनः स्वस्तिकं तत्प्रचक्षते ॥ 14 ॥

गुल्फौ च वृषणस्याधो व्युत्क्रमेणोर्ध्वतां गतौ ।
चितियुगं भूमिसंस्थं करौ च जानुनोपरि ॥ 15 ॥

व्यात्तवक्त्रो जलन्ध्रेण नासाग्रमवलोकयेत् ।
सिंहासनं भवेदेतत्सर्वव्याधिविनाशकम् ॥ 16 ॥

पादौ च भूमौ संस्थाप्य पृष्ठपार्श्वे निवेशयेत् ।
स्थिरं कार्यं समासाद्य गोमुखं गोमुखाकृतिः ॥ 17 ॥

एकं पादमथैकस्मिन्विन्यसेदूरुसंस्थितम् ।
इतरस्मिस्तथा पश्चाद्वीरासनमितीरितम् ॥ 18 ॥

प्रसार्य पादौ भुवि दण्डरूपौ करौ च पृष्ठे धृतपादयुग्मम् ।
कृत्वा धनुर्वत्परिवर्तिताङ्गं निगद्यते वै धनुरासनं तत् ॥ 19 ॥

उत्तानं शववत् भूमौ शयनं तु शवासनम् ।
शवासनं श्रमहरं चित्तविश्रान्तिकारणम् ॥ 20 ॥

जानूर्वोरन्तरे पादौ कृत्वा पादौ च गोपयेत् ।
पादोपरि च संस्थाप्य गुदं गुप्तासनं विदुः ॥ 21 ॥

मुक्तपद्मासनं कृत्वा उत्तानशयनं चरेत् ।
कूर्पराभ्यां शिरो वष्ट्यं रोगघ्नं मात्स्यमासनम् ॥ 22 ॥

उदरं पश्चिमाभासं कृत्वा तिष्ठत्ययत्नतः ।
नम्रितं वामपादं हि दक्षजानूपरि न्यसेत् ॥ 23 ॥

तत्र याम्यं कूर्परं च वक्त्रं याम्यकरेऽपि च ।
भ्रुवोर्मध्ये गता दृष्टिः पीठं मात्स्येन्द्रमुच्यते ॥ 24 ॥

जानूर्वोरन्तरे पादौ उत्तानौ व्यक्तसंस्थितौ ।
गुल्फौ चाच्छाद्य हस्ताभ्यामुत्तानाभ्यां प्रयत्नतः ॥ 25 ॥

कण्ठसंकोचनं कृत्वा नासाग्रमवलोकयेत् ।
गोरक्षासनमित्याहुर्यागिनां सिद्धिकारणम् ॥ 26 ॥

प्रसार्य पादौ भुवि दण्डरूपौ विन्यस्तभालं चितियुग्ममध्ये ।
यत्नेन पादौ च धृतौ कराभ्यां तत्पश्चिमोत्तानमिहासनं स्यात् ॥ 27 ॥

अङ्गुष्ठाभ्यामवष्टभ्य धरां गुल्फौ च खे गतौ ।
तत्रोपरि गुदं न्यस्य विज्ञेयं तूत्कटासनम् ॥ 28 ॥

वामपादचितेर्मूलं विन्यस्य धरणीतले ।
पाद दण्डेनयाम्येन वेष्टयेद्द्वामपादकम् ।
जानुयुग्मे करयुग्मेतत्संकटासनम् ॥ 29 ॥

पाण्योस्तलाभ्यामवलम्ब्य भूमिं तत्कूर्परस्थापितनाभिपार्श्वम् ।
उच्चासनो दण्डवदुत्थितः खे मायूरमेतत्प्रवदन्ति पीठम् ॥ 30 ॥

पद्मासनं समासाद्य जानूर्वोरन्तरे करौ ।
कूर्पराभ्यां समासीनो उच्चस्थः कुक्कुटासनम् ॥ 31 ॥

गुल्फौ च वृषणस्याधो व्युत्क्रमेण समाहितौ ।
ऋजुकायशिरोग्रीवं कूर्मासनमितीरितम् ॥ 32 ॥

कुक्कुटासनबन्धस्थं कराभ्यां धृतकन्धरम् ।
पीठं कूर्मवदुत्तानमेतदुत्तानकूर्मकम् ॥ 33 ॥

पृष्ठदेशे पादतलावङ्गुष्ठौ द्वौ च संस्पृशेत् ।
जानुयुग्मं पुरस्कृत्य साध्येन्मण्डूकासनम् ॥ 34 ॥

मण्डुकासनमध्यस्थं कूर्पराभ्यां धृतं शिरः ।
एतद्भ्रकवदुत्तानमेतदुत्तानमण्डुकम् ॥ 35 ॥

वामोरुमूलदेशे च याम्यं पादं निधाय वै ।
तिष्ठेत्तु वृक्षवद्भूमौ वृक्षासनमिदं विदुः ॥ 36 ॥

जङ्घोरुभ्यां धरां पीड्य स्थिरकायो द्विजानुना ।
जानूपरि करद्वन्द्वं गरुडासनमुच्यते ॥ 37 ॥

याम्यगुल्फे पादमूले वामभागे पदेतरम् ।
विपरीतं स्पृशेद् भूमिवृषासनमिदं भवेत् ॥ 38 ॥

अध्यास्य शेते करयुग्मवक्ष आलम्ब्य भूमिं करयोस्तलाभ्याम् ।
पादौ च शून्ये च वितस्ति चोर्ध्वं वदन्ति पीठं शलभं मुनीन्द्राः ॥ 39 ॥

अध्यास्य शेते हृदयं निधाय, भूमौ च पादौ प्रसार्यमाणौ ।
शिरश्च धृत्वा करदण्डयुग्मे, देहाग्निकारं मकरासनं तत् ॥ 40 ॥

अध्यास्य शेते पदयुग्मव्यस्तं, पृष्ठे निधायपि धृतं कराभ्याम् ।
आकुञ्च्य सम्यग्धुदरास्यगाढं, उष्ट्रं च पीठं यतयो वदन्ति ॥ 41 ॥

अङ्गुष्ठनाभिपर्यन्तमधोभूमौ च विन्यसेत् ।
धरां करतलाभ्यां धृत्वोर्ध्वशीर्षं फणीव हि ॥ 42 ॥

देहाग्निर्वर्द्धते नित्यं सर्वरोगविनाशनम् ।
जागर्ति भुजङ्गीदेवी भुजङ्गासनसाधनात् ॥ 43 ॥

उत्तानौ चरणौ कृत्वा संस्थाप्योपरि जानुनोः ।
आसनोपरि संस्थाप्य चोत्तानं करयुग्मकम् ॥ 44 ॥

पूरकैर्वायुमाकृष्य नासाग्रमवलोकयेत् ।
योगासनं भवेदेतद्योगिनां योगसाधने ॥ 45 ॥

Chapter Three

महामुद्रा नभोमुद्रा उड्डीयानं जलन्धरम् ।
मूलबन्धो महाबन्धो महाबेधश्च खेचरी ॥ 1 ॥

विपरीतकरी योनिर्वज्रोणी शक्तिचालनी ।
ताडागी माण्डुकी मुद्रा शाम्भवी पञ्चधारणा ॥ 2 ॥

अश्विनी पाशिनी काकी मातङ्गी च भुजङ्गिनी ।
पञ्चविंशतिमुद्राश्च सिद्धिदा इह योगिनाम् ॥ 3 ॥

मुद्राणां पटलं देवि कथितं तव संनिधौ ।
येन विज्ञातमात्रेण सर्वं सिद्धिः प्रजायते ॥ 4 ॥

गोपनीयं प्रयत्नेन न देयं यस्यकस्यचित् ।
प्रीतिदं योगिनां चैव दुर्लभंमरुतामपि ॥ 5 ॥

पार्ष्णिना वामपादस्य योनिमाकुञ्चयेत्ततः ।
नाभिग्रन्थि मेरुदण्डे सुधीः संपीड्य यत्नतः ॥ 6 ॥

मेढ्रं दक्षिणगुल्फेन दृढबन्धं समाचरेत् ।
जराविनाशिनी मुद्रा मूलबन्धो निगद्यते ॥ 7 ॥

संसारसागरं तर्तुमभिलषति यः पुमान् ।
सुगुप्तो विरलो भूत्वा मुद्रामेतां समभ्यसेत् ॥ 8 ॥

अभ्यासाद्वन्धनस्यास्य मरुत्सिद्धिर्भवेद्ध्रुवम् ।
साधयेद्यत्नतस्तर्हि मौनी तु विजितालसः ॥ 9 ॥

कण्ठसंकोचनं कृत्वा चिबुकं हृदये न्यसेत् ।
जालन्धरेकृते बन्धे षोडशाधारबन्धनम् ॥ 10 ॥

जालन्धरमहामुद्रामृत्योश्च क्षयकारिणी ।
सिद्धो जालन्धरो बन्धो योगिनां सिद्धिदायकः ।
षण्मासमभ्यसेद्यो हि स सिद्धो नात्र संशयः ॥ 11 ॥

उदरे पश्चिमं तानं नाभिरूर्ध्वं तु कारयेत् ।
उड्डीनं कुरुते यस्मादविश्रान्तं महाखगः ।
उड्डीयानं त्वसौ बन्धो मृत्युमातंगकेसरी ॥ 12 ॥

समग्राद् बन्धनाद्भ्येतदुड्डीयानं विशिष्यते ।
उड्डीयाने समभ्यस्ते मुक्तिः स्वाभाविकी भवेत् ॥ 13 ॥

वामपादस्य गुल्फेन पायुमूलं निरोधयेत् ।
दक्षपादेन तद्गुल्फं संपीड्य यत्नतः सुधीः ॥ 14 ॥

शनकैश्चालयेत्पार्ष्णि योनिमाकुञ्चयेच्छनैः ।
जालन्धरे धरेत्प्राणं महाबन्धो निगद्यते ॥ 15 ॥

महाबन्धः परो बन्धो जरामरण नाशनः ।
प्रसादादस्य बन्धस्य साधयेत्सर्ववाञ्छितम् ॥ 16 ॥

यत्तत्त्वं हरितालदेशरचितं भौमं लकारान्वितं,
वेदास्रं कमलासनेनसहितं कृत्वा हृदिस्थापितम् ।
प्राणान्तं विलीय पञ्चघटिकाश्चित्तान्वितं धारयेत् ।
ऐषा स्तम्भकरी सदा क्षितिजयं कुर्यादधोधारणा ॥ 17 ॥

पार्थिवीधारणामुद्रां यः करोति तु नित्यशः ।
मृत्युञ्जयः स्वयं सोऽपि स सिद्धो विचरेद्भुवि ॥ 18 ॥

शङ्खेन्दुप्रतिमं च कुन्दधवलं तत्त्वं किलालं शुभं ।
तत्पीयूषवकारबीजसहितं युक्तं सदा विष्णुना ।
प्राणं तत्र विलीय पञ्च घटिकाश्चित्तान्वितां धारयेत् ।
एषा दुःसहतापपापहरिणीस्यादाम्भसी धारणा ॥ 19 ॥

आम्भसीं परमां मुद्रां यो जानाति स योगवित् ।
जले च घोरे गंभीरे मरणं तस्यनोभवेत् ॥ 20 ॥

इयं तु परमा मुद्रा गोपनीया प्रयत्नतः ।
प्रकाशात्सिद्धिहानिः स्यात्सत्यं वच्मि च तत्त्वतः ॥ 21 ॥

यन्नाभिस्थितमिन्द्रगोपसदृशं बीजं त्रिकोणान्वितं
तत्त्वं वह्निमयं प्रदीप्तमरुणं रुद्रेण यत्सिद्धिदम् ।
प्राणं तत्र विलीय पञ्चघटिकाश्चित्तान्वितं धारयेत्
एषा कालगभीरभीतिहरिणी वैश्वानरी धारणा ॥ 22 ॥

प्रदीप्ते ज्वलिते वह्नौ पतितो यदि साधकः ।
एतन्मुद्रा प्रसादेन स जीवति न मृत्युभाक् ॥ 23 ॥

यद्भिन्नाञ्जनपुञ्जसंनिभमिदं धूम्रावभासं परं,
तत्त्वं सत्त्वमयं यकारसहितं यत्रेश्वरो देवता ।
प्राणं तत्र विलीय पञ्चघटिकाश्चित्तान्वितं धारयेत् ।
एषा खे गमनं करोति यामिनां स्याद्वायवी धारणा ॥ 24 ॥

इयं तु परमा मुद्रा जरामृत्युविनाशिनी ।
वायुनाश्रियते नापि खे च गतिप्रदायिनी ॥ 25 ॥

शठाय भक्तिहीनाय न देयं यस्यकस्यचित् ।
दत्ते च सिद्धिहानिः स्यात्सत्यं वच्मि च चण्ड ते ॥ 26 ॥

यत्सिन्द्वौ वरशुद्धवारिसदृशं व्योमाख्यमुद्रासते
तत्त्वं देवसदाशिवेन सहितं बीजं हकारान्वितम् ।
प्राणं तत्र विलीय पञ्चघटिकाश्चित्तान्वितं धारयेत्
एषा मोक्षकपाटभेदनकरी कुर्यान्नभोधारणा ॥ 27 ॥

आकाशीधारणां मुद्रां यो वेत्ति स योगवित् ।
न मृत्युर्जायते तस्य प्रलये नावसीदति ॥28॥

पायुमूलं वामगुल्फे संपीड्य दृढयत्नतः ।
याम्यपादं प्रासार्याथ करोपात्तपदाङ्गुलिः ॥29॥

कण्ठ संकोचनं कृत्वा भ्रुवोर्मध्यं निरीक्षयेत् ।
पूरकैर्वायुं सम्पूर्य महामुद्रा निगद्यते ॥30॥

वलितं पलितं चैव जरा मृत्युं निवारयेत् ।
क्षयकासं उदावर्तप्लीहाजीर्णज्वरं तथा ।
नाशयेत्सर्वरोगांश्च महामुद्राप्रसाधनात् ॥31॥

यत्र यत्र स्थितो योगी सर्वकार्येषु सर्वदा ।
उर्ध्वजिह्वः स्थिरो भूत्वा धारयेत्पवनं सदा ।
नभोमुद्रा भवेदेषा योगिनां रोगनाशिनी ॥32॥

जिह्वाधो नाडीं संछित्य रसनां चालयेत्सदा ।
दोहयेन्नवनीतेन लौहयन्त्रेण कर्षयेत् ॥33॥

एवं नित्यं समभ्यासाल्लम्बिका दीर्घतां व्रजेत् ।
यावद्गच्छेद्भ्रुवोर्मध्ये तदा सिध्यति खेचरी ॥34॥

रसनां तालुमूले तु शनैः शनैः प्रवेशयेत् ।
कपालकुहरे जिह्वा प्रविष्टा विपरीतगा ।
भ्रुवोर्मध्ये गता दृष्टिर्मुद्रा भवति खेचरी ॥35॥

न च मूर्च्छा क्षुधा तृष्णा नैवालस्यं प्रजायते ।
न च रोगो जरा मृत्युर्देवदेहः स जायते ॥36॥

नाग्निना दह्यते गात्रं न शोषयति मारुतः ।
न देहं क्लेदयन्त्यापो दशेन भुजङ्गमः ॥37॥

लावण्यं च भवेद्गात्रे समाधिर्जायते ध्रुवम् ।
कपालवक्त्रसंयोगे रसना रसमाप्नुयात् ॥38॥

नानारससमुद्भूतमानन्दं च दिने दिने ।
आदौ च लवणं क्षारं ततस्तिक्तकषायकम् ॥39॥

नवनीतं घृतं क्षीरं दधितक्रमधूनि च ।
द्राक्षारसं च पीयूषं जायते रसनोदकम् ॥40॥

रूपयौवनलावण्यं नारीणां पुरुषं विना ।
मूलबन्धमहाबन्धौ महाबेधं विना तथा ॥41॥

महाबन्धंसमासाद्य कुम्भकं चरेदुड्डीन ।
महाबेधः समाख्यातो योगिनां सिद्धिदायकः ॥42॥

महाबन्धमूलबन्धौ महाबेधसमन्वितौ ।
प्रत्यहं कुरुते यस्तु स योगी योगवित्तमः ॥43॥

न मृत्युतो भयं तस्य न जरा तस्य विद्यते ।
गोपनीयः प्रयत्नेन वेधोऽयं योगिपुंगवैः ॥44॥

नाभिमूले वसेत्सूर्यस्तालूमूले च चन्द्रमाः ।
अमृतं ग्रस्ते सूर्यस्ततो मृत्युवशो नरः ॥45॥

उर्ध्वं च योजयेत्सूर्यं चन्द्रं चाप्यध आनयेत् ।
विपरीतकरी मुद्रा सर्वतन्त्रेषु गोपिता ॥46॥

भूमौ शिरश्च संस्थाप्य करयुग्मं समाहितः ।
उर्ध्वपादः स्थिरो भूत्वा विपरीतकरी मता ॥47॥

मुद्रां च साधयेन्नित्यं जरां मृत्युं च नाशयेत् ।
स सिद्धः सर्वलोकेषु प्रलयेऽपि न सीदति ॥48॥

सिद्धासनं समासाद्य कर्णचक्षुर्नसामुखम् ।
अङ्गुष्ठतर्जनी मध्यानामाद्यैः पिदधीत वै ॥49॥

प्राणमाकृष्य काकीभिरपाने योजयेत्ततः ।
षट् चक्राणि क्रमाद्ध्यात्वा हुं हंसमनुना सुधीः ॥50॥

चैतन्यमानयेद्देवीं निद्रिता या भुजङ्गिनी ।
जीवेन सहितां शक्तिं समुत्थाप्य पराम्बुजे ॥51॥

शक्तिमयो स्वयं भूत्वा परं शिवेन संगमम् ।
नानासुखं विहारं च चिन्तयेत्परमं सुखम् ॥52॥

शिवशक्तिसमायोगादेकान्तं भुविभावयेत् ।
आनन्दमानसो भूत्वा अहं ब्रह्मेति संभवेत् ॥53॥

ब्रह्महाभ्रूणहा चैव सुरापो गुरु तल्पगः ।
एतैः पापैर्न लिप्यते योनि मुद्रा निबन्धनात् ॥54॥

योनिमुद्रा परागोप्या देवानामपि दुर्लभा ।
सकृत् लब्धसंसिद्धिः समाधिस्थः स एव हि ॥55॥

यानि पापानि घोराणि उपपापानि यानि च ।
तानि सर्वाणि नश्यन्ति योनिमुद्रा निबन्धनात् ।
तस्मादभ्यासनं कुर्याद्यादि मुक्तिं समिच्छति ॥56॥

धरामवष्टभ्य करयोस्तलाभ्यां उर्ध्वे क्षिपेत्पाद युगंशिरखे ।
शक्ति प्रबोधाय चिरजीवनाय वज्रोणिमुद्रां मुनयोः वदन्ति ॥57॥

अयं योगे योग श्रेष्ठो योगिनां मुक्तिकारणम् ।
अयं हितप्रदो योगो योगिनां सिद्धिदायकः ॥58॥

एतद्योगप्रसादेन बिन्दुसिद्धिर्भवेद्ध्रुवम् ।
सिद्धे विन्दौ महायत्ने किं न सिध्यति भूतले ॥59॥

भोगेन महता युक्तो यदि मुद्रां समाचरेत् ।
तथापि सकला सिद्धिर्भवति तस्य निश्चितम् ॥60॥

मूलाधारे आत्मशक्तिः कुण्डली पर देवता ।
शयिता भुजगाकारा सार्धं त्रिवलयान्विता ॥61॥

यावत्सा निद्रिता देहे तावज्जीवः पशुर्यथा ।
ज्ञानं न जायते तावत्कोटियोगं समभ्यसेत् ॥62॥

उद्घाटयेत्कवाटं च यथा कुञ्चिकयाहठात् ।
कुण्डलिन्याः प्रबोधेन ब्रह्मद्वारं प्रभेदयेत् ॥63॥

नाभिं समष्ट्य वस्त्रेण न च नग्नो बहिः स्थितः ।
गोपनीयगृहे स्थित्वा शक्तिचालनमभ्यसेत् ॥64॥

वितस्तिप्रमितं दीर्घं विस्तारे चतुरङ्गुलम् ।
मृदुलं धवलं सूक्ष्मं वेष्टनाम्बरलक्षणम् ॥65॥

एवमम्बरयुक्तं च कटिसूत्रेण योजयेत् ।
संलिप्य भस्मनागात्रं सिद्धासनथाचरेत् ॥66॥

नासाभ्यां प्राणमाकृष्याप्यपाने योजयेद्बलात् ।
तावदाकुञ्चयेद्गुह्यमश्विनीमुद्रया शनैः ॥67॥

यावद्गच्छेत्सुषुम्णायां हठाद्वायुः प्रकाशयेत् ।
तदा वायुप्रबन्धेन कुम्भिका च भुजङ्गिनी ॥68॥

बद्धश्वासस्ततो भूत्वा चोर्ध्वमार्गं प्रपद्यते ।
विना शक्तिचालनेन योनिमुद्रा न सिध्यति ॥69॥

आदौ चालनमभ्यस्य योनिमुद्रां ततोऽभ्यसेत् ।
इति ते कथितं चण्डकपालं शक्तिचालनम् ॥70॥

गोपनीयं प्रयत्नेन दिने दिने समभ्यसेत् ।
मुद्रेयं परमा गोप्या जरामरणनाशिनी ॥71॥

तस्मादभ्यसनं कार्यं योगिभिः सिद्धिकांक्षिभिः ।
नित्यं योऽभ्यसते योगी सिद्धिस्तस्य करे स्थिता ।
तस्य विग्रहसिद्धिः स्याद्रोगाणां संक्षयो भवेत् ॥72॥

उदरं पश्चिमोत्तानं कृत्वा च तडागाकृतिः ।
ताडागी सा परामुद्रा जरा मृत्यु विनाशिनी ॥73॥

मुखं संमुद्रितं कृत्वा जिह्वामूलं प्रचालयेत् ।
शनैर्ग्रसेदमृतं तां माण्डुकीं मुद्रिकां विदुः ॥74॥

वलितं पलितं नैव जायते नित्ययौवनम् ।
न केशे जायते पाको यः कुर्यान्नित्यमाण्डुकीम् ॥75॥

नेत्रान्तरं समालोक्य चात्मारामं निरीक्षयेत् ।
सा भवेच्छाम्भवीमुद्रा सर्वतन्त्रेषुगोपिता ॥76॥

वेदशास्त्रपुराणानि सामान्यगणिका इव ।
इयं तु शाम्भवीमुद्रा गुप्ता कुलवधूरिव ॥77॥

स एव ह्यादिनाथश्च स च नारायणः स्वयम् ।
स च ब्रह्मा सृष्टिकारी यो मुद्रां वेत्ति शाम्भवीम् ॥78॥

सत्यं सत्यं पुनः सत्यं सत्यमाह महेश्वरः ।
शाम्भवी यो विजानीयात्स च ब्रह्म न चान्यथा ॥ 79 ॥

कथिता शाम्भवीमुद्रा श्रृणुष्व पञ्चधारणाम् ।
धारणानि समासाद्य किं न सिद्ध्यति भूतले ॥ 80 ॥

अनेन नर देहेन स्वर्गेषु गमनागमम् ।
मनोगतिर्भवेत्तस्य खेचरत्वं न चान्यथा ॥ 81 ॥

आकुंचयेद् गुदद्वारं प्रकाशयेत् पुनः पुनः ।
सा भवेदश्विनीमुद्रा शक्तिप्रबोधकारिणी ॥ 82 ॥

आश्विनी परमा मुद्रा गुह्यरोगविनाशिनी ।
बलपुष्टिकरी चैव अकालमरणं हरेत् ॥ 83 ॥

कण्ठपृष्ठे क्षिपेत्पादौ पाशवद् दृढबन्धनम् ।
सा एव पाशिनी मुद्रा शक्ति प्रबोधकारिणी ॥ 84 ॥

पाशिनी महती मुद्रा बलपुष्टि विधायिनी ।
साधनीया प्रयत्नेन साधकैः सिद्धिकांक्षिभिः ॥ 85 ॥

काकचञ्चुवदास्येन पिबेद्वायुं शनैः शनैः ।
काकी मुद्रा भवेदेषा सर्वरोग विनाशिनी ॥ 86 ॥

काकी मुद्रा परा मुद्रा सर्वतन्त्रेषुगोपिता ।
अस्याः प्रसादमात्रेण काकवन्नीरुजो भवेत् ॥ 87 ॥

कण्ठमग्नेजले स्थित्वा नासाभ्यां जलमाहरेत् ।
मुखान्निर्गमयेत्पश्चात् पुनर्वक्त्रेण चाहरेत् ॥ 88 ॥

नासाभ्यां रेचयेत् पश्चात् कुर्यादेवं पुनः पुनः ।
मातङ्गिनी परा मुद्रा जरामृत्यु विनाशिनी ॥ 89 ॥

विरले निर्जने देशे स्थित्वा चैकाग्रमानसः ।
कुर्यान्मातङ्गिनी मुद्रां मातङ्ग इव जायते ॥ 90 ॥

यत्र यत्र स्थितो योगी सुखमत्यन्तमश्नुते ।
तस्मात् सर्व प्रयत्नेन साधयेत् मुद्रिकांपराम् ॥ 91 ॥

वक्त्रं किञ्चित्पुप्रसार्य चानिलं गलया पिवेत् ।
 सा भवेद् भुजङ्गी मुद्रा जरामृत्युविनाशिनी ॥92॥
 यावच्च उदरे रोगमजीर्णादि विशेषतः ।
 तत्सर्वनाशयेदाशु यत्र मुद्रा भुजङ्गिनी ॥93॥
 इदं तु मुद्रापटलं कथितं चण्डकापाले ।
 वल्लभं सर्वसिद्धानां जरामरणनाशनम् ॥94॥
 शठाय भक्तिहीनाय न देयं यस्य कस्यचित् ।
 गोपनीयं प्रयत्नेन दुर्लभं मरुतामपि ॥95॥
 ऋजवे शान्तचित्ताय गुरुभक्तिपराय च ।
 कुलीनाय प्रदातव्यं भोगमुक्ति प्रदायनम् ॥96॥
 मुद्राणां पटलं ह्येतत्सर्वव्याधि विनाशकम् ।
 नित्यमभ्यास शीलस्य जठराग्निविवर्धनम् ॥97॥
 तस्य नो जायते मृत्युर्नास्य वार्धक्यमायते ।
 नाग्निजलभयं तस्य वायोरपि कुतो भयम् ॥98॥
 कासः श्वासः प्लीहा कुष्ठं श्लेष्मरोगाश्च विंशतिः ।
 मुद्राणां साधनाच्चैव विनश्यन्ति न संशयः ॥99॥
 बहुना किमिहोक्तेन सारं वच्मि च चण्ड ते ।
 नास्ति मुद्रासमं किञ्चिद् सिद्धिदं क्षितिमण्डले ॥100॥

Chapter Four

अथातः सम्प्रवक्ष्यामि प्रत्याहारकमुत्तमम् ।
 यस्य विज्ञानमात्रेण कामादिरिपुनाशनम् ॥1॥
 यतो यतो निश्चरति मनश्चञ्चलमस्थिरम् ।
 ततस्ततो नियम्यैतदात्मन्येव वशं नयेत् ॥2॥
 यत्र यत्र गता दृष्टिर्मनस्तत्र प्रयच्छति ।
 अतः प्रत्याहरेदेतदात्मन्येव वशं नयेत् ॥3॥
 पुरस्कारं तिरस्कारं सुश्राव्यं वा भयानकम् ।
 मनस्तमान्नियम्यैतदात्मन्येव वशं नयेत् ॥4॥

शीतं चापि तथा चोष्णं यन्मनस्संस्पर्शयोगतः ।
तस्मात्प्रत्याहरेदेतदात्मन्येव वशं नयेत् ॥ 5 ॥

सुगन्धे वाऽपि दुर्गन्धे मनो घ्राणेषु जायते ।
तस्मात्प्रत्याहरेदेतदात्मन्येव वशं नयेत् ॥ 6 ॥

मधुराम्लकतिक्तादिरसं गतं यदा मनः ।
तस्मात्प्रत्याहरेदेतदात्मन्येव वशं नयेत् ॥ 7 ॥

Chapter Five

अथातः संप्रवक्ष्यामि प्राणायामस्य सद्बिधिम् ।
यस्य साधनमात्रेण देवतुल्यो भवेन्नरः ॥ 1 ॥

आदौ स्थानं तथा कालं मिताहारं तथापरम् ।
नाडीशुद्धिं ततः पश्चात्प्राणायामं च साधयेत् ॥ 2 ॥

दूरदेशे तथाऽरण्ये राजधान्यां जनान्तिके ।
योगारम्भं न कुर्वीत कृतश्चेत्सिद्धिहा भवेत् ॥ 3 ॥

अविश्वासं दूरदेशे अरण्ये रक्षिवर्जितम् ।
लोकारण्ये प्रकाशश्च तस्मात्प्रीणिविवर्जयेत् ॥ 4 ॥

सुदेशे धार्मिके राज्ये सुभिक्षे निरुपद्रवे ।
कृत्वा तत्रैकं कुटीरं प्राचीरैः परिवेष्टितम् ॥ 5 ॥

वापी कूपतडागं च प्राचीरं मध्यवर्ति च ।
नात्युच्चं नातिनिम्नं च कुटीरं कीटवर्जितम् ॥ 6 ॥

सम्यग्गोमयलिप्तं च कुटीरं तत्र निर्मितम् ।
एवं स्थानेषु गुप्तेषु प्राणायामं समभ्यसेत् ॥ 7 ॥

हेमन्ते शिशिरे ग्रीष्मे वर्षायां च ऋतौ तथा ।
योगारम्भं न कुर्वीत कृते योगो हि रोगदः ॥ 8 ॥

वसन्ते शरदि प्रोक्तं योगारम्भं समाचरेत् ।
तदा योगी भवेत्सिद्धो रोगान्मुक्तो भवेद्ध्रुवम् ॥ 9 ॥

चैत्रादिफाल्गुनान्ते च माघादिफाल्गुनान्तिके ।
द्वौ द्वौ मासावृतुभागावनुभावश्चतुश्चतुः ॥ 10 ॥

वसन्तश्चैत्रवैशाखौ ज्येष्ठाषाढा च ग्रीष्मकौ ।
वर्षाश्रावणभाद्राभ्यां शरदाश्विनकार्तिकौ ।
मार्गपौषौ च हेमन्तः शिशिरो माघफाल्गुनौ ॥ 11॥

अनुभावं प्रवक्ष्यामि ऋतूनां च यथोदितम् ।
माघादिमाधवान्तेषु वसन्तानुभवं विदुः ॥ 12॥

चैत्रादि चाषाढान्तं च निदाघानुभवं विदुः ।
आषाढादि चाश्विनान्तं प्रावृषानुभवं विदुः ॥ 13॥

भाद्रादि मार्गशीर्षन्तं शरदोऽनुभवं विदुः ।
कार्तिकान्माघमासान्तं हेमन्तानुभवं विदुः ।
मार्गार्दीश्चतुरो मासाञ्जिशिरानुभवं विदुः ॥ 14॥

वसन्ते वापि शरदि योगारम्भं समाचरेत् ।
तदा योगो भवेत्सिद्धो विनाऽऽयासेन कथ्यते ॥ 15॥

मिताहारं विना यस्तु योगारम्भं तु कारयेत् ।
नानारोगो भवेत्तस्यकिञ्चिद्योगो न सिध्यति ॥ 16॥

शाल्यन्नं यवपिष्टं वा तथा गोधूमपिष्टकम् ।
मुद्गं माषचणकादि शुभ्रं च तुषवर्जितम् ॥ 17॥

पटोलं सुरणं मानं कक्कोलं च शुकाशकम् ।
द्राढिकां कर्कटीं रम्भां डुम्बरीं कण्टकण्टकम् ॥ 18॥

आमरम्भां बालरम्भां रम्भादण्डं च मूलकम् ।
वार्ताकीं मूलकं ऋद्धिं योगी भक्षणमाचरेत् ॥ 19॥

बालशाकं कालशाकं तथा पटोलपत्रकम् ।
पञ्चशाकं प्रशंसीयाद्वास्तूकं हिमलोचिकाम् ॥ 20॥

शुद्धं सुमधुरं स्निग्धमुदरार्धविवर्जितम् ।
भुज्यते सुरसंप्रीत्या मिताहारमिमं विदुः ॥ 21॥

अत्रेन पूरयेदर्धं तोयेन तु तृतीयकम् ।
उदरस्य तुरीयांशं संरक्षेद्वायुचारणे ॥ 22॥

कट्वम्लं लवणं तिक्तं भृष्टं च दधितक्रकम् ।
शाकोत्कटं तथा मद्यं तालं च पनसं तथा ॥ 23॥

कुलत्थं मसुरं पाण्डुं कूष्मान्दं शाकदण्डकम् ।
तुम्बीकोलकपित्थं च कण्टबिल्वं पलाशकम् ॥ 24 ॥

कदम्बं जम्बीरं बिम्बं लकुचं लशुनं विषम् ।
कामरङ्गं पियालं च हिङ्गुशाल्मलिकेमुकम् ॥ 25 ॥

योगारम्भे वर्जयेच्च पथिस्त्रीवह्निसेवनम् ॥ 26 ॥

नवनीतं घृतं क्षीरं शर्कराद्यैक्षवं गुडम् ।
पक्ववर्म्भां नारिकेलं दाडिम्बमशिवासवम् ।
द्राक्षां तु लवलीं धात्रीं रसमम्लविवर्जितम् ॥ 27 ॥

एलाजातिलवङ्गं च पौरुषं जम्बुजाम्बलम् ।
हरीतकीं च खर्जूरं योगी भक्षणमाचरेत् ॥ 28 ॥

लघुपाकं प्रियं स्निग्धं तथा धातुप्रपोषणम् ।
मनोऽभिलषितं योग्यं योगी भोजनमाचरेत् ।
कठिनं दुरितं पूतिमुष्णं पर्युषितं तथा ।
अतिशीतं चातिचोष्णं भक्ष्यं योगी विवर्जयेत् ॥ 29 ॥

प्रातःस्नानोपवासादि कायक्लेशविधिं तथा ।
एकाहारं निराहारं यामान्ते च न कारयेत् ॥ 30 ॥

एवं विधि विधानेन प्राणायामं समाचरेत् ।
आरम्भे प्रथमे कुर्यात्क्षीराज्यं नित्यभोजनम् ।
मध्याह्ने चैव सायाह्ने भोजनद्वयमाचरेत् ॥ 31 ॥

कुशासने मृगाजिने व्याघ्राजिने च कम्बले ।
स्थूलासने समासीनः प्राङ्गमुखो वाप्युदङ्मुखः ।
नाडीशुद्धिं समासाद्य प्राणायामं समभ्यसेत् ॥ 32 ॥

चण्डकापालिरुवाच

नाडीशुद्धिं कथं कुर्यान्नाडीशुद्धिस्तु कीदृशी ।
तत्सर्वं श्रोतुमिच्छामि तद्वदस्व दयानिधे ॥ 33 ॥

घेरण्ड उवाच

मलाकुलासु नाडीषु मारुतो नैव गच्छति ।
प्राणायामः कथं सिद्धयेत्तत्त्वज्ञानं कथं भवेत् ।
तस्मान्नाडीशुद्धिमादौ प्राणायामं ततोऽभ्यसेत् ॥ 34 ॥

नाडीशुद्धिर्द्विधा प्रोक्ता समनुनिर्मनुस्तथा ।
बीजेन समनुं कुर्यान्निर्मनुं धौतिकर्मणा ॥ 35 ॥

धौतिकर्म पुरा प्रोक्तं षट्कर्मसाधने यथा ।
श्रुणुष्व समनुं चण्ड नाडीशुद्धिर्यथा भवेत् ॥ 36 ॥

उपविश्यासने योगी पद्मासनं समाचरेत् ।
गुर्वादिन्यासनं कुर्याद्यथैव गुरुभाषितम् ॥ 37 ॥

नाडीशुद्धिं प्रकुर्वीत प्राणायामविशुद्धये ।
वायुबीजं ततो ध्यात्वा धूम्रवर्णं सतेजसम् ॥ 38 ॥

चन्द्रेण पूरयेद्वायुं बीजं षोडशकैः सुधीः ।
चतुःषष्ट्या मात्रया च कुम्भकेनैव धारयेत् ।
द्वात्रिंशन्मात्रया वायुं सूर्यनाड्या च रेचयेत् ॥ 39 ॥

नाभिमूलाद्वह्निमुत्थाप्य धायेत्तेजोवनीयुतम् ॥ 40 ॥

वह्निबीजषोडसेन सूर्यनाड्या च पूरयेत् ॥ 41 ॥

चतुःषष्ट्या च मात्रया कुम्भकेनैव धारयेत् ।
द्वात्रिंशन्मात्रया वायुं शशिनाड्या च रेचयेत् ॥ 42 ॥

नासाग्रे शशधृग्बिम्बं ध्यात्वा ज्योत्स्नासमन्वितम् ।
ठं बीजं षोडशेनैव इडया पूरयेन्मरुत् ॥ 43 ॥

चतुःषष्ट्या मात्रया च वं बीजेनैव धारयेत् ।
अमृतं प्लावितं ध्यात्वा नाडीधौतिं विभावयेत् ।
द्वात्रिंशेन लकारेण दृढं भाव्यं विरेचयेत् ॥ 44 ॥

एवंविधां नाडी शुद्धिं कृत्वा नाडीं विशोधयेत् ।
दृढोभूत्वाऽऽसनं कृत्वा प्राणायामं समाचरेत् ॥ 45 ॥

सहितः सूर्यभेदश्च उज्जायी शीतली तथा ।
भस्त्रिका भ्रामरी मूर्च्छा केवली चाष्टकुम्भकाः ॥ 46 ॥

सहितो द्विविधः प्रोक्तः सगर्भश्च निगर्भकः ।
सगर्भो बीजमुच्चार्य निगर्भो बीजं वीजतः ॥ 47 ॥

प्राणायामं सगर्भं च प्रथमं कथयामि ते ।
सुखासनेचोपविश्य प्राङ्गमुखो वाऽप्युदङ्मुखः ।
रजोगुणं विधिं ध्यायेद्रक्तवर्णमवर्णकम् ॥ 48 ॥

इडया पूरयेद्वायुं मात्रया षोडशैः सुधीः ।
पूरकान्ते कुम्भकाद्ये कर्तव्यस्तूडिडयानकः ॥ 49 ॥

सत्त्वमयं हरिं ध्यात्वा उकारं कृष्णवर्णकम् ।
चतुःषष्ट्या च मात्रया कुम्भकेनैव धारयेत् ॥ 50 ॥

तमोमयं शिवं ध्यात्वा मकारं शुक्लवर्णकम् ।
द्वात्रिंशन्मात्रया चैव रेचयेद्विधिना पुनः ॥ 51 ॥

पुनःपिङ्गलयाऽऽपूर्य कुम्भकेनैव धारयेत् ।
इडया रेचयेत्पश्चात् तद्वीजेन क्रमेण तु ॥ 52 ॥

अनुलोमविलोमेन वारंवारं च साधयेत् ।
पूरकान्ते कुम्भकान्तं धृतनासापुटद्वयम् ।
कनिष्ठानामिकाङ्गुष्ठैस्तर्जनी मध्यमे विना ॥ 53 ॥

प्राणायामो निगर्भस्तु विना बीजेन जायते ।
वामजानूपरिन्यस्तं वामपाणितलं भ्रमेत् ।
एकादिशतपर्यन्तं पूरकुम्भकरेचकम् ॥ 54 ॥

उत्तमा विंशतिर्मात्रा मध्यमा षोडशी स्मृता ।
अधमा द्वादशी मात्रा प्राणायामास्त्रिधा स्मृताः ॥ 55 ॥

अधमाज्जायते घर्मो मेरुकम्पश्च मध्यमात् ।
उत्तमाच्च भूमित्यागस्त्रिविधं सिद्धिलक्षणम् ॥ 56 ॥

प्राणायामात्खेचरत्वं प्राणायामादुजां हतिः ।
प्राणायामाच्छक्तिबोधः प्राणायामान्मनोन्मनी ।
आनन्दो जायते चित्ते प्राणायामी सुखी भवेत् ॥ 57 ॥

कथितं सहितं कुम्भं सूर्यभेदनकं शृणु ।
पूरयेत् सूर्यनाड्या च यथाशक्ति बहिर्मरुत् ॥ 58 ॥

धारयेद्बहुयत्नेन कुम्भकेन जलन्धरैः ।
यावत्स्वेदं नखकेशाभ्यां तावत्कुर्वन्तु कुम्भकम् ॥ 59 ॥

प्राणोऽपानः समानश्चोदानव्यानौ तथैव च ।
नागः कूर्मश्च कृकरो देवदत्तो धनञ्जयः ॥60॥

हृदि प्राणो वहेन्नित्यमपानो गुदमण्डले ।
समानो नाभिदेशे तु उदानः कण्ठमध्यगः ॥61॥

व्यानो व्याप्य शरीरे तु प्रधानाः पञ्च वायवः ।
प्राणाद्याः पञ्च विख्याता नागाद्याः पञ्चवायवः ॥62॥

तेषामपि च पञ्चानां स्थानान् च वदाम्यहम् ।
उद्वारे नाग आख्यातः कूर्मस्तून्मीलने स्मृतः ॥63॥

कृकरः क्षुत्कृते ज्ञेयो देवदत्तो विजृम्भणे ।
न जहाति मृते क्वापि सर्वव्यापी धनञ्जयः ॥64॥

नागो गृह्णाति चैतन्यं कूर्मश्चैव निमेषणम् ।
क्षुत्तृषं कृकरश्चैव चतुर्थेन तु जृम्भणम् ॥65॥

भवेद्धनञ्जयाच्छब्दं क्षणमात्रं न निःसरेत् ॥66॥

सर्वे तु सूर्यसम्भिन्ना नाभिमूलात्समुद्धरेत् ।
इडया रेचयेत्पश्चाद्धैर्येणाखण्डवेगतः ॥67॥

पुनः सूर्येण चाकृष्य कुम्भयित्वा यथाविधि ।
रेचयित्वा साधयेत्तु क्रमेण च पुनः पुनः ॥68॥

कुम्भकः सूर्यभेदस्तु जरामृत्युविनाशकः ।
बोधयेत्कुण्डलीं शक्तिं देहानलविवर्धनम् ।
इति ते कथितं चण्डं सूर्यभेदनमुत्तमम् ॥69॥

नासाभ्यां वायुमाकृष्य मुखमध्ये च धारयेत् ।
हृद्गलाभ्यां समाकृष्य वायुं वक्त्रे च धारयेत् ॥70॥

मुखं प्रक्षाल्य सम्वन्द्य कुर्याज्जालन्धरं ततः ।
आशक्तिं कुम्भकं कृत्वा धारयेदविरोधतः ॥71॥

उज्जायी कुम्भकं कृत्वा सर्वकार्याणिसाधयेत् ।
न भवेत्कफरोगश्च क्रूरवायुरजीर्णकम् ॥72॥

आमवातः क्षयः कासो ज्वरः प्लीहा न विद्यते ।
जराभृत्यविनाशाय चोज्जार्यी साधयेन्नरः ॥ 73 ॥

जिह्वया वायुमाकृष्य चोदरे पूरयेच्छनैः ।
क्षणं च कुम्भकं कृत्वा नासाभ्यां रचयेत्पुनः ॥ 74 ॥

सर्वदा साधयेद्योगी शीतलीकुम्भकं शुभम् ।
अजीर्णं कफपित्तं च नैव तस्य प्रजायते ॥ 75 ॥

भस्त्रिका लोहकाराणां यथाक्रमेण सम्भ्रमेत् ।
तथा वायुं च नासाभ्यामुभाभ्यां चालयेच्छनैः ॥ 76 ॥

एवं विंशतिवारं च कृत्वा कुर्याच्च कुम्भकम् ।
तदन्ते चालयेद्वायुं पूर्वोक्तं च यथाविधि ॥ 77 ॥

त्रिवारं साधयेदेनं भस्त्रिकाकुम्भकं सुधीः ।
न च रोगो न च क्लेश आरोग्यं च दिने दिने ॥ 78 ॥

अर्धरात्रे गते योगी जन्तूनां शब्दवर्जिते ।
कर्णौ पिधाय हस्ताभ्यां कुर्यात्पूरककुम्भकम् ॥ 79 ॥

शृणुयादक्षिणे कर्णे नादमन्तर्गतं शुभम् ।
प्रथमं झिल्लिकानादं वंशीनादं ततः परम् ॥ 80 ॥

मेघझर्झरभ्रमरी घण्टा कास्यं ततः परम् ।
तुरीभेरीमृदङ्गादिनिनादानेकदुन्दुभिः ॥ 81 ॥

एवं नानाविधो नादो जायते नित्यमभ्यसात् ।
अनाहतस्य शब्दस्य तस्य शब्दस्य यो ध्वनिः ॥ 82 ॥

ध्वनेरन्तर्गतं ज्योतिर्ज्योतिरन्तर्गतं मनः ।
तन्मनो विलयं याति तद्विष्णोः परमं पदम् ।
एवं भ्रामरीसंसिद्धिः समाधिसिद्धिमाप्नुयात् ॥ 83 ॥

जपादष्ट गुणं ध्यानं ध्यानादष्टगुणं तपः ।
तपसोऽष्टगुणं गानं गानात्परतरं नहि ॥ 84 ॥

सुखेन कुम्भकं कृत्वा मनश्च भ्रुवोरन्तरम् ।
सन्त्यज्य विषयान्सर्वान्मनोमूच्छी सुखप्रदा ।
आत्मनि मनसो योगादानन्दो जायते ध्रुवम् ॥ 85 ॥

हङ्कारेण बहिर्याति सःकारेण विशेत्पुनः ।
षट्शतानि दिवारात्रौ सहस्राण्येकविंशतिः ।
अजपां नाम गायत्री जीवो जपति सर्वदा ॥ 86 ॥

मूलाधारे यथा हंसस्तथा हि हृदि पङ्कजे ।
तथा नासापुटद्वन्द्वे त्रिभिर्हंससमागमः ॥ 87 ॥

षण्णवत्यङ्गुलीमानं शरीरं कर्मरूपकम् ।
देहाद्विहर्गितो वायुः स्वभावात् द्वादशाङ्गुलिः ॥ 88 ॥

गायने षोडशाङ्गुल्यो भोजने विंशतिस्तथा ।
चतुर्विंशाङ्गुलि पन्थे निद्रायां त्रिंशदङ्गुलिः ।
मैथुने षट्त्रिंशदुक्तं व्यायामे च ततोऽधिकम् ॥ 89 ॥

स्वभावेऽस्य गतेन्यूने परमायुः प्रवर्द्धते ।
आयुःक्षयोऽधिके प्रोक्तो मारुतेचान्तरादगते ॥ 90 ॥

तस्मात्प्राणे स्थिते देहे मरणं नैव जायते ।
वायुना घटसम्बन्धे भवेत्केवलकुम्भकः ॥ 91 ॥

यावज्जीवं जपेन्मन्त्रमजपासंख्यकेवलम् ।
अद्यावधि धृतं संख्याविभ्रमं केवली कृते ॥ 92 ॥

अत एव हि कर्तव्यः केवलीकुम्भको नरैः ।
केवली चाजपासंख्या द्विगुणा च मनोन्मनी ॥ 93 ॥

नासाभ्यां वायुमाकृष्य केवलं कुम्भकं चरेत् ।
एकादिकचतुःषष्टिं धारयेत्प्रथमे दिने ॥ 94 ॥

केवलीमष्टधा कुर्याद्यामे यामे दिने दिने ।
अथ वा पञ्चधा कुर्याद्यथा तत्कथयामि ते ॥ 95 ॥

प्रातर्मध्याह्नसायाह्ने मध्यरात्रे चतुर्थके ।
त्रिसन्ध्यमथवा कुर्यात्सममाने दिने दिने ॥ 96 ॥

पञ्चवारं दिने वृद्धिवर्रिकं च दिने तथा ।
अजपापरिमाणं च यावत्सिद्धिः प्रजायते ॥ 97 ॥

प्राणायामं केवलीं च तदा वदति योगवित् ।
केवलीकुम्भके सिद्धे किं न सिध्यति भूतले ॥ 98 ॥

Chapter Six

स्थूलं ज्योतिस्थासूक्ष्मं ध्यानस्य त्रिविधं विदुः ।
स्थूलं मूर्तिमयं प्रोक्तं ज्योतिस्तेजोमयं तथा ।
सूक्ष्मं बिन्दुमयं ब्रह्म कुण्डली परदेवता ॥ 1 ॥

स्वकीयहृदये ध्यायेत्सुधासागरमुत्तमम् ।
तन्मध्ये रत्नद्वीपं तु सुररत्नवालुकामयम् ॥ 2 ॥

चतुर्दिक्षु नीपतरुं बहुपुष्पसमन्वितम् ।
नोपोपवनसंकुलैर्वैष्टितं परिखा इव ॥ 3 ॥

मालतीमल्लिकाजातीकैसरैश्चम्पकैस्तथा ।
पारिजातैः स्थलपद्मैर्गन्धामोदितदिङ्मुखैः ॥ 4 ॥

तन्मध्ये संस्परेद्योगी कल्पवृक्षं मनोहरम् ।
चतुःशाखाचतुर्वेदं नित्यपुष्पफलान्वितम् ॥ 5 ॥

भ्रमराः कोकिलास्तत्र गुञ्जन्ति निगदन्ति च ।
ध्यायेत्तत्र स्थिरो भूत्वा महामाणिक्यमण्डपम् ॥ 6 ॥

तन्मध्ये तु स्परेद्योगी पर्यङ्कं सुमनोहरम् ।
तत्रेष्टदेवतां ध्यायेद्यद्भ्युत्थानं गुरुभाषितम् ॥ 7 ॥

यस्य देवस्य यद्रूपं यथा भूषणवाहनम् ।
तद्रूपं ध्यायते नित्यं स्थूलध्यानमिदं विदुः ॥ 8 ॥

सहस्रारे महापद्मे कर्णिकायां विचिन्तयेत् ।
विलग्नसहितं पद्मं दलैर्द्वादशभिर्युतम् ॥ 9 ॥

शुक्लवर्णं महातेजो द्वादशैर्बीजभाषितम् ।
ह स क्ष म ल व र युं ह स ख प्रे यथाक्रमम् ॥ 10 ॥

तन्मध्ये कर्णिकायां तु अकथादिरेखात्रयम् ।
ह ल क्ष कोण संयुक्तं प्रणवं तत्र वर्तते ॥ 11 ॥

नादबिन्दुमयं पीठं ध्यायेत्तत्र मनोहरम् ।
तत्रोपरि हंसयुग्मं पादुका तत्र वर्तते ॥ 12 ॥

ध्यायेत्तत्र गुरुं देवं द्विभुजं च त्रिलोचनम् ।
श्वेताम्बरधरं देवं शुक्लगन्धानुलेपनम् ॥ 13 ॥

शुक्लपुष्पमयं माल्यं रक्तशक्तिसमन्वितम् ।
एवंविधगुरुध्यानात्स्थूल ध्यानं प्रसिध्यति ॥ 14॥

स्थूलध्यानं तु कथितं तेजोध्यानं शृणुष्व मे ।
यद्ब्रह्मचरिणो योगसिद्धिरात्मप्रत्यक्षमेव च ॥ 15॥

मूलाधारे कुण्डलिनी भुजङ्गाकाररूपिणी ।
तत्र तिष्ठति जीवात्मा प्रदीपकलिकाकृतिः ।
ध्यायेत्तेजोमयं ब्रह्म तेजोध्यानं परात्परम् ॥ 16॥

भ्रूवोर्मध्ये मनऊर्ध्वे यत्तेजः प्रणवात्मकम् ।
ध्यायेज्जवालावलीयुक्तं तेजोध्यानं तदेव हि ॥ 17॥

तेजोध्यानं श्रुतं चण्ड सूक्ष्मध्यानं शृणुष्व मे ।
बहुभाग्यवशाद्यस्य कुण्डली जाग्रती भवेत् ॥ 18॥

आत्मना सह योगेन नेत्ररन्ध्राद्विनिर्गता ।
विहरेद्राजमार्गे च चञ्चलत्वान्न दृश्यते ॥ 19॥

शाम्भवी मुद्रया योगो ध्यानयोगेन सिध्यति ।
सूक्ष्मध्यानमिदं गोप्यं देवानामपि दुर्लभम् ॥ 20॥

स्थूलध्यानाच्छतगुणं तेजोध्यानं प्रचक्षते ।
तेजोध्यानाल्लक्षगुणं सूक्ष्मध्यानं परात्परम् ॥ 21॥

इति ते कथितं चण्ड ध्यानयोगं सुदुर्लभम् ।
आत्मसाक्षाद्भवेद्यस्मात्तस्माद्ब्रह्म विशिष्यते ॥ 22॥

Chapter Seven

समाधिश्च परो योगो बहुभागेन लभ्यते ।
गुरोः कृपाप्रसादेन प्राप्यते गुरुभक्तितः ॥ 1॥

विद्याप्रतीतिः स्वगुरुप्रतीतिरात्मप्रतीतिर्मनसः प्रबोधः ।
दिने दिने यस्य भवेत्स योगी सुशोभनाभ्यासमुपैति सद्यः ॥ 2॥

घटाद्भिन्नं मनः कृत्वा चैक्यं कुर्यात्परात्मनि ।
समाधिं तं विजानीयान्मुक्तसंज्ञो दशादिभिः ॥ 3॥

अहं ब्रह्म न चान्योऽस्मि ब्रह्मैवाहं न शोकभाक् ।
सच्चिदानन्दरूपोऽहं नित्यमुक्तः स्वभाववान् ॥ 4 ॥

शाम्भव्या चैव भ्रामर्या खेचर्या योनिमुद्रया ।
ध्यानं नादं रसानन्दं लयसिद्धिश्चतुर्विधा ॥ 5 ॥

पञ्चधा भक्ति योगेन मनोमूर्च्छां च षड्विधा ।
षड्विधोऽयं राजयोगः प्रत्येकमवधारयेत् ॥ 6 ॥

शाम्भवीं मुद्रिकाः कृत्वा आत्मप्रत्यक्षमानयेत् ।
बिन्दु ब्रह्ममयं दृष्ट्वा मनस्तत्र नियोजयेत् ॥ 7 ॥

खमध्ये कुरुचात्मानमात्ममध्ये च खं कुरु ।
आत्मानं खमयं दृष्ट्वा न किञ्चिदपि बुध्यते ।
सदानन्दमयो भूत्वा समाधिस्थो भवेन्नरः ॥ 8 ॥

अनिलं मन्द वेगेन भ्रामरीकुम्भकं चरेत् ।
मन्दं मन्दं रेचयेद्वायुं भृङ्नादं ततो भवेत् ॥ 9 ॥

अन्तःस्थं भ्रमरीनादं श्रुत्वा तत्र मनो नयेत् ।
समाधिजार्यते तत्र चानन्दः सोऽहमित्यतः ॥ 10 ॥

खेचरीमुद्रासाधनात् रसनोर्ध्वगता यदा ।
तदा समाधिसिद्धिः स्याद्वित्वा साधारणक्रियाम् ॥ 11 ॥

योनिमुद्रां समासाद्य स्वयं शक्तिमयो भवेत् ।
सुशृङ्गाररसेनैव विहरेत्परमात्मनि ॥ 12 ॥

आनन्दमयः सम्भूत्वा एक्यं ब्रह्मणि संभवेत् ।
अहं ब्रह्मेति चाद्वैतसमाधिस्तेन जायते ॥ 13 ॥

स्वकीयहृदये ध्यायेदिष्टदेव स्वरूपकम् ।
चिन्तयेद्भक्तियोगेन परमाह्लादपूर्वकम् ॥ 14 ॥

आनन्दाश्रुपुलकेन दशाभावः प्रजायते ।
समाधिः सम्भवेत्तेन सम्भवेच्च मनोन्मनी ॥ 15 ॥

मनोमूर्च्छां समासाद्य मन आत्मनि योजयेत् ।
परमात्मनः समायोगात्समाधिं समवाप्नुयात् ॥ 16 ॥

इति ते कथितं चण्ड समाधिर्मुक्तिलक्षणम् ।
राजयोगः समाधिः स्यादेकात्मन्येव साधनम् ।
उन्मनी सहजावस्था सर्वे चैकात्मवाचकाः ॥ 17 ॥

जले विष्णुः स्थले विष्णुर्विष्णुः पर्वतमस्तके ।
ज्वालामालाकुले विष्णुः सर्वं विष्णुमयं जगत् ॥ 18 ॥

भूचराः खेचराश्चामी यावन्तो जीवजन्तवः ।
वृक्षगुल्मलतावल्लीतृणाद्याः वारि पर्वताः ।
सर्वं ब्रह्म विजानीयात्सर्वं पश्यति चात्मनि ॥ 19 ॥

आत्मा घटस्थचैतन्यमद्वैतं शाश्वतं परम् ।
घटाद्विभिन्नतो ज्ञात्वा वीतरागं विवासनम् ॥ 20 ॥

एवं मिथः समाधिः स्यात्सर्वसंकल्पवर्जितः ।
स्वदेहे पुत्रदारादिबान्धवेषु धनादिषु ।
सर्वेषु निर्ममो भूत्वा समाधिं समवाप्नुयात् ॥ 21 ॥

तत्त्वं लयामृतं गोप्यं शिवोक्तं विविधानि च ।
तेषां संक्षेपमादाय कथितं मुक्तिलक्षणम् ।
वाचां संक्षेपमादाय कथितं मुक्ति लक्षणम् ॥ 22 ॥

इति ते कथितं चण्ड समाधि दुर्लभः परः ।
यं ज्ञात्वा न पुनर्जन्म जायते भूमि मण्डले ॥ 23 ॥

Translation

Prayer

I bow to the Creator, who gave these spiritual instructions regarding knowledge of hatha yoga which blooms in the form of raja yoga. Knowledge of hatha yoga serves as a ladder for those aspirants who wish to attain that stage.

Chapter One

1. Once, King Chandakapali went to the hermitage of Sage Gheranda and, after prostrating before him with due humility and devotion, asked him a question.
2. O Yogeshwara, god of yoga! I wish to learn ghat-astha yoga, which is a means to self-realization. O Yogeshwara! O Lord! Kindly tell me about this.
3. O Mahabaho! I appreciate your question. O dear child, I will explain to you the subject you are keen to learn about. Listen carefully to acquire this knowledge.
4. There is no fetter like delusion and there is no force as powerful as yoga. There is no greater friend than knowledge and no foe worse than ego.
5. Just as by practising the letters of the alphabet in sequence, knowledge of all the scriptures is possible, similarly, by mastering yoga, self-realization is achieved.

6. The bodies (ghata) of all living beings are born out of good and bad deeds. The body creates karmas which in turn create the body.
7. Just as the vessels (ghata) attached to the water wheel keep moving up and down according to the movement of the bullocks, similarly a living being also keeps on revolving in the cycle of birth and death in this universe due to his past actions.
8. The body invariably decays like an unbaked earthen pot placed in water; strengthen and purify the body in the fire of yoga.
9. Purification, firmness, steadiness, patience, lightness, inner perception and non-involvement are the seven sadhanas for the ghata.
- 10–11. Through shatkarmas, purification of the body is achieved; through asanas, firmness; through mudras, steadiness; and through pratyahara, patience is achieved. Through pranayama, agility or lightness is achieved; through meditation, self-realization; and through samadhi, non-involvement or detachment and, undoubtedly, liberation, are achieved.
12. Performing the shatkarmas: dhauti, basti, neti, lauliki, trataka and kapalbhata, is essential.
13. Antar dhauti, danta dhauti, hrid dhauti and moola shodhana are the four types of dhauti which keep the body clean and healthy.
14. Antar dhauti also has four subdivisions: vatsara, varisara, vahnisara and bahishkrita; they are performed to make the body clean and pure.
15. Shaping the lips like a crow's beak, slowly, slowly suck in as much air as possible, circulate it inside the abdomen and then gradually expel it completely.
16. Vatsara is a very secret technique for purifying the body. It destroys all diseases and activates the gastric fire, which helps to digest food.
- 17–18. Drink water slowly through the mouth up to the throat. The abdomen is then moved and the water

evacuated through the anus. The technique of varisara dhauti is most secret. It purifies the body. A yogi who perfects this technique attains a divine body.

- 19–20. Retaining prana vayu, pull the navel against the spinal column one hundred times. This enables agnisara dhauti to be performed. Diseases of the abdomen are removed and the digestive fire is stimulated. This cleansing practice is most secret and is unknown even to the divine beings. By merely doing this practice the body becomes healthy and beautiful, there is no doubt about that.
21. Purse the lips like the beak of a crow, take in air through the mouth, filling the abdomen. Retain the air for one and a half hours in the abdomen, then circulate it and expel it through the rectum. It is top secret and is called bahishkrita dhauti.
- 22–24. Standing in water up to the navel, push out the rectum (shakti nadi) and wash it, removing the waste products. When the nadi is clean, draw it in again. This cleansing practice of dhauti is very secret. It is not even accessible to the gods. Just by practising this dhauti, one attains a body like that of a divine being. It is not possible to practise bahishkrita mahadhauti until the ability to retain air in the abdomen for up to one and a half hours has been developed.
25. There are five kinds of danta dhauti: dantamoola (cleaning the teeth), jihvamoola (cleaning the tongue), karnarandhra (cleaning the two ears) and kapalarandhra (cleaning the upper region of the head). Thus there are five in all.
- 26–27. Rub or massage the roots of the teeth with the juice of the khadira plant or with clean earth until the impurities are removed. Yogis must adopt this method every morning to protect their teeth. Those who know yoga consider dantamoola dhauti to be a significant part of the purification process.

28. Now I will tell you the method for cleaning the tongue. Lengthening of the tongue destroys old age, death and disease.
- 29–31. The root of the tongue should be cleaned by inserting the index finger, middle finger and ring finger in the throat. Kapha disorders (phlegm) are removed by slowly and gently rubbing the tongue. Once this cleaning and rubbing is over, apply a little butter on the tongue. Again perform the action like that of milking a cow. Thereafter, stretch the tongue out with the help of small tongs. The length of the tongue increases by doing this practice daily at the time of sunrise and sunset.
32. Clean the orifices of both ears with the index and ring fingers. By practising this daily, nada or inner sound may be heard.
- 33–34. Massage the forehead with the right hand thumb. With this type of practice one is relieved of kapha dosha. The nadis are purified and divine vision is attained. Practise daily at the end of sleep, after food and before sleep.
35. There are three types of hrid dhauti: using a stick, regurgitating water, and using cloth.
- 36–37. The stem of a soft portion of the banana tree, a thin turmeric stem or a sugarcane stem should be repeatedly inserted (through the mouth) and then slowly withdrawn from the middle chest. Then kapha, pitta and mucus should be evacuated through the mouth. This practice definitely destroys even heart disease.
- 38–39. After a meal the practitioner should drink water up to the throat and, after looking upwards for a moment, expel the water by vomiting. Kapha and pitta disorders are removed.
- 40–41. A roll of fine cotton cloth four fingers wide should be gradually swallowed and then taken out slowly. The practice of vastra dhauti rectifies skin problems,

- fever, enlarged spleen, leprosy and kapha (phlegm) and pitta (bile) disorders. It keeps the body free of disease, increases stamina and cheerfulness, and promotes healthy growth.
- 42–44. Disorders of apana vayu cannot be removed without performing moola shodhana or anal cleansing. Cleaning of the anus is essential with a turmeric root or the middle finger combined with repeated washing with water. This practice removes hard faeces and constipation, the body becomes graceful and healthy and the digestive fire is stimulated.
45. The practice of basti is of two types: jala basti and dry (sthala) basti. Jala basti is done in water. Dry basti is done on land, in a dry place.
- 46–47. Sitting in water up to the navel, adopt utkatasana, then contract and expand the anal region. This is jala basti. This practice removes wind disorders, urinary and digestive problems, and makes the body beautiful like that of Kamadeva, the god of love.
- 48–49. Sitting in paschimottanasana, practise basti in the lower portion, contracting and expanding the anus by means of ashwini mudra. It removes diseases of the stomach and bowels and enhances the digestive fire.
- 50–51. Take a thread half as long as the arm, insert it in the nose and take it out through the mouth. This is called neti karma. Its practice enables one to attain perfection in khechari, elimination of kapha and attainment of divine vision.
52. The abdomen should be rotated very swiftly from side to side. This lauliki (nauli) destroys all types of diseases and activates the digestive fire.
- 53–54. Gazing at a subtle object without blinking the eyes, until tears begin to fall, is known as trataka. With constant practice of trataka, shambhavi mudra is achieved, defects of the eyes are removed and divine vision is attained.

55. Vatakrama, vyutkrama and sheetkrama are the three types of bhalbhati. Practising them eliminates phlegm and mucus from the body.
- 56–57. The breath is to be inhaled through ida nadi (the left nostril) and exhaled through pingala nadi (the right nostril). Then the breath is inhaled through surya nadi (the right nostril) and exhaled through chandra nadi (the left nostril). Inhalation and exhalation should be fast; do not hold it. This technique removes kapha dosha.
58. Suck water through both nostrils and expel it through the mouth. Practise this repeatedly. This vyutkrama kapalbhati removes kapha disorders.
- 59–60. Suck in water through the mouth with a hissing sound and expel it through the nose. Through this practice the body of the practitioner becomes as beautiful as that of Cupid and signs of old age do not manifest. Cleanliness and purity manifest in the body and kapha dosha is removed.

Chapter Two

- 1–2. The number of asanas is the same as the number of animal species in the world. Lord Shiva described eighty-four lakh asanas first of all, out of which eighty-four are best. Out of these eighty-four asanas, thirty-two asanas should be considered as especially auspicious in this mortal world.
- 3–6. In this mortal world, where the death of every human being is mandatory, the following thirty-two asanas are sufficient to attain siddhi or perfection:
1. Siddhasana, 2. Padmasana, 3. Bhadrasana, 4. Muktasana, 5. Vajrasana, 6. Swastikasana, 7. Simhasana, 8. Gomukhasana, 9. Veerasana, 10. Dhanurasana, 11. Mritasana (Shavasana), 12. Guptasana, 13. Matsyasana, 14. Matsyendrasana, 15. Gorakshasana, 16. Paschimottanasana, 17. Utkatasana, 18. Sankatasana, 19. Mayurasana, 20. Kukkutasana, 21. Koorm-

asana, 22. Utthan koormasana, 23. Mandukasana, 24. Utthan mandukasana, 25. Vrikshasana, 26. Garudasana, 27. Vrishasana, 28. Shalabhasana, 29. Makarasana, 30. Ushtrasana, 31. Bhujangasana, 32. Yogasana.

- 7–8. An ascetic yogi places the heel of one foot midway between the genitals and the anus with the other heel pressing the pubis. Placing the chin on the chest, one remains motionless in a steady posture. Keeping the vision unmoved, one gazes at the eyebrow centre. Liberation, is attained on perfecting this practice, which is called siddhasana.
9. Keeping the left foot on the right thigh and the right foot on the left thigh, bring the arms behind the back and catch hold of the left big toe with the right hand and the right big toe firmly with the left hand, look at the nosetip, keeping the chin in contact with the heart. It eradicates all diseases. It is called padmasana.
- 10–11. With care, place both heels underneath the testes. Hold both big toes from behind, adopt jalandhara bandha and gaze at the nosetip. Bhadrasana eradicates all diseases.
12. Keeping the left heel close to the perineum, place the right heel over it and sit with the head, neck and body upright and straight. Muktasana provides siddhi (perfection) to yogis.
13. Making both thighs hard and strong like vajra, the feet are placed on either side of the anus, and then it becomes vajrasana. This asana provides siddhi (perfection) to yogis.
14. Placing both the soles between the thighs and knees, adopt a triangular posture and sit with a balanced feeling. This is called swastikasana.
- 15–16. Placing the upturned heels of both feet crosswise underneath the testes, have the knees on the ground, the hands on the knees and open the mouth. Perform

jalandhara bandha, fixing the gaze at the eyebrow centre or at the nosetip. This asana by the name of simhasana eradicates all diseases.

17. Placing both feet on the ground beside the buttocks, sitting upright with the body steady is gomukhasana, which resembles the face of a cow.
18. Placing one foot near the thigh of the other leg and keeping the other foot at the back is called veerasana.
19. Stretch both legs straight on the floor like sticks. Taking both hands towards the back, catch hold of both feet and let the body acquire the shape of a bow. According to yogis this is dhanurasana.
20. Relax the whole body on the floor like a dead person. Shavasana removes fatigue and relaxes the mind.
21. Keep both feet hidden in the middle portion of both the knees and bring the anal region between the feet. This is called guptasana.
22. In the position of mukta padmasana bring the elbows of both hands around the head and lie flat on the floor. This destroyer of diseases is called matsyasana.
- 23–24. Pull the abdomen towards the back, keeping the back straight. Bend the left leg with effort, placing the heel over the right thigh. Support the right elbow on the leg. Placing the chin on the right hand, fix the gaze at the eyebrow centre. This is known as matsyendrasana.
- 25–26. Keep the toes of both the feet in a hidden manner in the middle of both thighs and knees. Holding both heels with both hands, contract the throat and fix the gaze at the nosetip. This gorakshasana enables yogis to attain siddhi.
27. Stretch both legs out, like a staff, on the ground in a natural way and grasp the big toes. Then place the head between the knees. Thus it becomes paschimottanasana.

28. Keeping the big toes of the feet on the floor, sit with their support without letting the heels touch the floor and place the anal region on the heels. This will be known as *utkatasana*.
29. Keeping the part of the left leg below the knee on the floor, wrap the right leg around the left leg and then place both hands on the knees. This is called *sankatasana*.
30. Keeping the palms of both hands firmly on the floor, place both elbows to the rear on each side of the navel. Then raise both the legs and body like a stick (horizontal). This is called *mayurasana*.
31. Sit in *padmasana*. Insert the hands between the thighs and calves and place them on the floor. Placing the palms of the hands firmly on the floor, raise the body from the floor. The body will be supported on the elbows. It is called *kukkutasana*.
32. Placing both heels underneath the testes in opposite directions and sitting with the body, head and neck straight and in line is called *koormasana*.
33. Practising *kukkutasana*, then holding the shoulders in both hands in *kukkutasana* and straightening the body like a tortoise is called *utthan koormasana*.
34. Bring both feet to the back, join the big toes and keep both knees in front. Thus is performed *mandukasana*.
35. Adopting *mandukasana*, the head is placed firmly on the elbows and the chest, abdomen and waist are lifted up like a frog. This is *utthan mandukasana*.
36. Place the right foot at the root of the left thigh and stand straight on the ground like a tree. This is called *vrikshasana*.
37. Press the ground with both the thighs and knees, keep the body steady and sit with both hands on the knees. This is called *garudasana*.
38. Place the anus on the right foot. The upturned left foot touches the ground on the right side with

the left heel to the left side of the anus. The top of the feet should remain on the floor. This is called vrishasana.

39. Lie flat with the face towards the ground. Both arms are placed by the sides of the chest. The palms should be placed firmly on the ground. The legs are raised in this position. Munis have called it shalabhasana.
40. Lie with the chest on the ground and the legs spread out and hold the head in the arms. This asana, which activates fire of the body, is called makarasana.
41. Lie prone (face downwards). Bend both the legs and cross them behind the back. Hold the feet with the hands and squeeze the mouth and abdomen firmly. This is called ushtrasana.
- 42–43. Keep the body from the toes to the navel on the floor and placing the palms of the hands also firmly on the floor, raise the head like a snake. This is called bhujangasana. The fire of the body increases, all diseases are destroyed and kundalini shakti is awakened by the practice of bhujangasana.
- 44–45. Place both the feet on the opposite knees and keep both hands on the knees in chin mudra. With inhalation suck the air inside and hold the breath while gazing at the nosetip. Yogis must practise it daily. It is called yogasana.

Chapter Three

- 1–3. Maha mudra, nabho mudra, uddiyana bandha, jalandhara bandha, moola bandha, maha bandha, maha bheda mudra, khechari mudra, vipareeta karani mudra, yoni mudra, vajroni mudra, shakti chalini mudra, tadagi mudra, manduki mudra, shambhavi mudra, the five dharanas or concentrations, ashwini, pashinee, kaki, matangini and bhujangini are the twenty-five mudras. These enable yogis to attain siddhi, perfection or mastery.

- 4–5. O Goddess! I have imparted the knowledge of mudras. Mere knowledge of these provides mastery. Their knowledge provides bliss to yogis. This knowledge is not easily accessible even to the gods. Always keep this knowledge secret.
- 6–9. With the left heel, press the genital region between the anus and testes and contract the anus. Make an effort to press the navel knot or complex close to the spinal column and firmly press the genital organ with the right heel. This is moola bandha. It helps in attaining victory over old age. Aspirants who wish to move beyond *samsara*, the materialistic world, should practise this mudra in a hidden place. With the practice, marut siddhi is certain. Therefore, it should be practised with effort, silently and without laziness.
- 10–11. Contract the throat and place the chin on the chest. This becomes jalandhara bandha. It gives control over the sixteen bases. This great mudra by the name of jalandhara bandha gives victory over death. Mastery over jalandhara bandha provides siddhis to yogis and by practising it for just six months a yogi definitely becomes a perfected being.
- 12–13. Contract the upper abdomen (above the navel) towards the back equally; as a result the great bird (prana) rises upward. It is called uddiyana bandha. It is the lion which challenges the elephant of death. Uddiyana bandha is the foremost bandha. One attains liberation easily by its practice.
- 14–16. Close the anus with the left heel, press the left heel with the right foot with effort, slowly expand and contract the perineum and retain prana vayu through jalandhara bandha. This is called maha bandha. It is superior to all other bandhas and is the destroyer of old age and death. All desires are fulfilled by the grace of this bandha.
- 17–18. The colour of the earth element is yellow like orpiment (a yellow mineral used as a pigment), the

bija or seed mantra is *Lam* लं, it is square in shape and Brahma is the God. Manifest it with the yogic power, retain it in the heart and hold the prana there up to five ghati (about two hours). It is known as parthivi mudra or adhodharana mudra. After mastering it, a practitioner becomes the conqueror of the earth. One who practises prithvi dharana wins over death and wanders over the earth as a siddha, a perfected person.

19–21. The colour of water is bright white like that of a conch, moon or lotus. Its bija mantra is *Vam* वं and its god is Lord Vishnu. Retaining the focus on this element in the heart, become one-pointed and hold the prana by kumbhaka up to five ghati (about two hours). This mudra is known by the name of ambhasi dharana. Leaving aside all worries, breathe in deeply, retain the breath up to five ghati and meditate on the water element. Meditate on the merits, demerits, yantra and symbol of the water element. By this dharana all the pains, heat and sins of a human being are destroyed, i.e. internal heat and excitement are finished. By doing this practice, no harm can come to a person even in deep water. It is an important mudra and it is imperative to keep it secret. If a practitioner describes this practice to others or discloses this technique, then his siddhi is destroyed. This is the truth.

22–23. The region of fire is the navel region. Its colour is red. Its yantra is a triangle. Its mantra is *Ram* रं and its deity is Rudra. This fire element is full of streaming light, lustre, radiance and is the provider of siddhi, perfection. Manifesting it by yogic power, retain the prana with one-pointedness for five ghati (about two hours). By practising it, fear of death, vanishes and no harm is done by fire. It is called vaishvanari dharana. If a sadhaka falls into a raging fire, he will not die due to the powerful effect of this mudra.

- 24–26. The colour of *vayu*, air, is light black like that of collyrium or smoke. Its bija mantra is *Yam* यं. This tattwa has sattwic properties. Having manifested it by yogic power, retain the prana vayu up to two hours with one-pointedness. With the practice of this mudra, by the name of *vayviye dharana*, a *sadhaka* achieves the power to travel in space and cannot die due to air. This major mudra destroys old age and death and enables one to fly in space. This *dharana* should never be disclosed to an undevoted and wicked person. By doing so, *siddhi* is destroyed. My above statement is true.
- 27–28. The colour of *akasha* tattwa, the ether element, is like the pure water of the ocean. Its bija mantra is *Ham* हं and its deity is *Sadashiva*. This *nabhodharana* mudra is perfected by retaining prana vayu for up to two hours, with a peaceful mind – it then opens the gate to liberation. A yogi who knows *akashi dharana* does not fall prey to death and does not perish even during *pralaya* (cosmic destruction).
- 29–31. Press the anal region with the left heel, stretch the right leg in front, hold the toes of the right foot with both hands and keep the gaze focused at the eyebrow centre and contract the throat. It is called *maha mudra*. Tuberculosis, *kapha* disorders, constipation, enlarged spleen, prolonged fever and other diseases are cured by this practice and the body attains health.
32. Wherever one is and during all activities, a yogi should keep the tongue turned upward and retain the breath. *Nabho mudra* destroys all the disorders of a yogi.
- 33–40. The *nadi* connecting the tongue and the root of the tongue, which is located underneath the tongue, is to be severed and the tip of the tongue is to be moved continuously. By applying butter and with the help of *dohan kriya* (the milking process) it is to be pulled with iron forceps. With daily practice the tongue

becomes elongated. Its length should be so increased that it can reach the eyebrow centre. Khechari mudra is then accomplished. In this way the tongue should gradually be inserted into the root of the palate. By folding the tongue upward and backward, it should be taken right up to the nasal cavity. Keep the awareness fixed at the eyebrow centre at that time. This is khechari mudra.

The practitioner of khechari mudra is not troubled by unconsciousness, hunger, thirst, laziness, etc. Fear of any disorder or disease, old age and death vanishes as the body becomes divine. The physical body is neither burnt in fire nor dried up by wind. It can neither be made wet by water nor does poison have any effect as in the case of snake bite. The body becomes graceful and charming. Unshakeable samadhi is perfected.

Various juices are produced as a result of the union between the forehead and the mouth through the tongue. Therefore, strange types of juices keep being produced, day in and day out, through the tongue of the practitioner. New blissful experiences manifest. In the beginning salty, alkaline, bitter and astringent tastes and then the taste of butter, ghee (clarified butter), milk, curd, buttermilk, honey, grapes or raisins, and then nectar are produced.

- 41–44. In the same way that the beauty, youth and elegance of a woman are useless without a man, similarly moola bandha and maha bandha are also fruitless without maha bedha. First practise maha bandha then, while performing uddiyana bandha, retain the air through kumbhaka. This has been called maha bedha. The yogis who perform maha bandha and moola bandha along with maha bedha daily are considered the best of all yogis. They are neither affected by old age nor the fear of death. The best of the yogis should keep it secret.

- 45–48. The sun plexus is located at the root of the navel and the moon plexus is located at the root of the palate. A person dies when the sun consumes nectar secreted by the moon, but when the chandra nadi consumes the nectar, there is no fear of death. Therefore, the sun is to be brought up and the moon is to be brought down. This is vipareeta karani mudra, which is secret by all standards. Place the head on the ground, provide support with both hands and raise both legs; this is vipareeta karani mudra. By practising it daily, old age and death are eliminated. The practitioner of this mudra attains siddhi (perfection) in all the lokas (worlds) and is not grieved even at the time of dissolution (of the universe).
- 49–56. Sit in siddhasana and close the ears with both thumbs, both eyes with the index fingers, both nostrils with the middle fingers and the mouth with the ring fingers and little fingers. With the help of kaki mudra, pull the prana and join it with apana, and keeping the awareness at the six chakras in the body, awaken kundalini shakti with the mantras *Hoom* and *Hamsa* and bring the jivatma (individual soul) along with it to sahasrara. There should be the silent feeling at that time that ‘I am moving comfortably along with Shiva and enriched by Shakti. With the union of Shiva and Shakti I have become blissful Brahman too.’ This is yoni mudra. By means of this mudra one becomes liberated from sins like killing a brahmin or a foetus, drinking alcohol or polluting the bed of the teacher. Yoni mudra is a top secret kriya. It is not easily accessible even to the gods. Those who achieve mastery over it by regular practice attain samadhi. All the major sins, minor sins, etc., of the universe are erased by yoni mudra. Thus it should be practised by people seeking salvation.

57–60. Place both hands firmly on the ground and lift both the feet and the head into the sky. Learned ones have named it vajroni mudra, which facilitates the flow of energy and provides one with life. This mudra is the best, it provides mukti (liberation) and siddhi (perfection) to yogis, and is favourable. A sadhaka becomes competent in urdhvaretas tattwa due to the blessing of bindu siddhi, and once bindu siddhi is achieved, what work cannot be accomplished on this earth? Even pursuers of enjoyments can certainly achieve all the siddhis by perfecting this mudra.

61–72. In mooladhara, where kundalini sleeps in the form of a serpent with three and a half coils, a living being remains in the state of an animal (ignorance) as long as the kundalini remains sleeping. Therefore, one should keep on practising until such time that knowledge manifests.

Just as a door opens only when the lock is opened with a key, in the same way brahmarandhra can only be opened when kundalini is awakened. It should be practised in a secluded place with the navel covered with a piece of cloth tied around it. Practising this mudra naked in the open is prohibited.

A soft piece of cloth (about 10 cm wide and 23 cm long) is secured around the navel by a thread tied around the waist. Smear ash on the body, sit in siddhasana and while pulling the prana, merge it with apana. Keep the anus contracted by means of ashwini mudra as long as the sushumna passage is not cleared or lighted. Thus, with the air held by kumbhaka, kundalini in the form of a serpent awakens and stands upright in the passage.

Yoni mudra cannot be perfected without the practice of shakti chalini mudra. First practise shakti chalini mudra, then practise yoni mudra. O Chandakapali! Thus practise this shakti chalini mudra daily which I have told you of, and keep it secret as far as

practicable. Whosoever practises it attains all the siddhis, including vigraha siddhi, and all diseases are destroyed or overcome.

73. Sit in paschimottanasana and expand the abdomen as if it were full of water. This is an important mudra which removes the fear of old age and death.
- 74–75. Keeping the mouth closed, the tongue should be rotated inside the palate and nectar flowing from sahasrara should be slowly tasted by the tongue. This is called manduki mudra. By this practice wrinkling of the body and greying of the hair cease and permanent youth is attained.
- 76–81. Steady the gaze at the eyebrow centre, on one's self, the atma or soul, and meditate. This is shambhavi mudra. It is a very secret tantric practice. The Vedas, shastras and Puranas are like an ordinary woman and shambhavi mudra is like a bride. Practitioners of this practice are themselves Adinath Narayana and Brahma, the creator of this world. Take this saying as absolutely true, that a person knowing shambhavi mudra is Maheshwara, is Brahman in reality. Shambhavi mudra has been described above, now the series of five concentrations, pancha dharana, is explained. After having attained siddhi, mastery, over it, what work cannot be accomplished or perfected! After having attained mastery over these five concentration practices, a human being can even go to heaven and return in the body. Through these dharanas one becomes as swift as the mind and one achieves khecharatva (the ability to move in space).
- 82–83. Contracting and expanding the anal region repeatedly is called ashwini mudra. It awakens kundalini. This mudra is the destroyer of diseases pertaining to the anus and reproductive system, the provider or enhancer of physical energy and the saviour from untimely death.

- 84–85. Taking both the legs behind the neck, hold them together firmly like a noose. This is pashinee mudra for awakening energy. It provides strength and vitality. A yogi desirous of siddhi should practise it with effort.
- 86–87. Inhale slowly through the mouth, shaping it like the beak of a crow. This is kaki mudra, the destroyer of all ailments. This great mudra should be kept secret by all means. By practising this mudra, relief from all disorders is achieved. Just like a crow, one becomes free from disease.
- 88–91. Standing in water up to the throat, inhale deeply, drawing water up through the nostrils and expelling water out of the mouth. It should be practised repeatedly. This great mudra is known as matangini mudra. When it is perfected, there is no fear of old age and death, and a yogi becomes powerful like an elephant and always remains happy. It should be practised with concentration in a quiet, secluded place away from other people. This mudra should be perfected with sincere effort.
- 92–93. Opening the mouth wide enough, suck air through the throat. This is known as bhujangini mudra. Once it is mastered, all abdominal disorders are removed; old age and death are eliminated.
- 94–100. O Chandakapali! Here I have told you about the various mudras, which all fulfil the desires of keeping away old age and death. Do not teach them to evil or undeserving people who lack devotion. These mudras are not even accessible to the gods. Both worldly enjoyments and liberation are attained through these mudras. They should only be imparted to those who have surrendered themselves to the guru, belong to a good family and whose minds are the abode of peace.
- With daily practice all diseases are eliminated and the digestive fire is activated. The worries of old age and death disappear. A practitioner is neither touched by

death nor old age, nor has any fear of water, air or fire. Twenty types of kapha problems such as asthma and colds are eliminated by practising the described mudras. There is no doubt about this.

O Chanda! I have explained to you everything about mudras and there is nothing else to tell you. There is no other practice in the world like mudra which enables you to achieve success and completeness.

Chapter Four

1–7. Now I will explain the highest pratyahara. By this practice, enemies like lust, etc., are destroyed.

Wherever this restless mind travels, bring it back, putting it under the control of the self, the soul or spirit. Wherever one looks the mind follows; therefore withdraw it and put it under the control of the self.

Take the mind off words which are respectful or insulting, pleasing or displeasing to the hearing and put it under the control of the self.

Cold and heat affect the mind through the sense of touch; therefore withdraw it and put it under the control of the self.

Take the mind from both the fragrant and the obnoxious odours that distract it and put it under the control of the self.

If the mind becomes attracted towards tastes which are sweet, alkaline, sour, etc., take it away from these and place it under the control of the self. This is pratyahara.

Chapter Five

1. Now I shall explain the technique of pranayama, by the mere practice of which a human being becomes like a deva or god.
2. First select the place and time, eat moderately and purify the nadis. After this, pranayama should be practised.

- 3–7. Yogic practices should not be done in a far-off place, in a forest, in a capital city or in a crowd, otherwise there will be loss of siddhi, lack of success. Far-off places are forbidden because no one can be believed in a distant country, a forest is an insecure place, and in a capital city there is excessive population. Therefore, all three places are prohibited for pranayama. It should be done in a beautiful spiritual region, where food is readily available, and the country is free from internal or external disturbances. Making a hut there, construct a boundary around it. There should be a well or a water source. The ground on which that hut is constructed should be neither too high nor too low, plastered with cow dung, free from insects and in a secluded place. Pranayama should be practised there.
- 8–15. Yogic practices should not be commenced during winter, extreme cold, summer or the rainy season. If yogic practices are undertaken during these seasons, it leads to the spread of diseases. It is correct to start the practices during spring and autumn. When yogic practices are undertaken during these seasons, one certainly attains success and becomes free from diseases. There are twelve months in a year from Chaitra (March) to Phalguna (February), and six seasons, each of two months duration. In practice, each season is experienced for four months, from Magha (January) four months each. Chaitra to Vaishakha (March–April) is spring (vasanta); Jyeshtha to Ashadha (May–June) is summer (ghrishma); Shravana to Bhadrapada (July–August) is the rainy season (varsha); Ashwina to Kartika (September–October) is autumn (sharada); Marga Shirsha to Pausha (November–December) is winter (hemanta); and Magha to Phalguna (January–February) is extremely cold (shishira).

From Magha to Vaishakha (January–April) spring is experienced; from Chaitra to Ashadha (March–June) summer; from Ashadha to the end of Ashwina (June–September) monsoon rains; from Bhadrapada to Marga Shirsha (August–November) autumn; from Kartika to Magha (October–January) winter; and from Marga Shirsha to Phalguna (November–February) extreme cold is experienced.

It has been said that one attains success by commencing yogic practices during spring and autumn.

- 16–22. A practitioner who undertakes yoga without moderating the diet suffers from many diseases and does not make progress in yoga. A practitioner should eat food prepared from rice, barley or wheat flour, and pulses such as green gram (mung), black gram (urad) and horse gram, which have been cleaned. Parval, jack fruit, certain root vegetables and berries, bitter gourd (karela), cucumber, figs, plantain (banana) and its stem and root, eggplant (brinjal), medicinal roots and fruits, and seasonal fresh leafy green vegetables can be eaten. Five leafy green vegetables similar to spinach (balashaka, kalashaka, patolapatraka, vashtaka and himalochika) are recommended. The stomach should be half filled with pleasing, pure, sweet, cooling, oily or lubricating materials until satisfied, and half of the stomach should be left empty. Learned people have termed it *mitahara*, meaning balance, control or moderation in eating. Half of the stomach should be filled with food, a quarter with water and the fourth quarter left empty for the circulation of air.
- 23–31. When commencing yogic practice, one should avoid bitter, sour or acidic, salty and astringent foods, fried food, curd, buttermilk, heavy vegetables, wine, palm nuts and over-ripe jack fruit. Consuming foods such as horse gram and lentils, pandu fruit, pumpkin

and vegetable stems, gourds, berries, limes, garlic, asafoetida, etc., is prohibited.

A beginner should avoid excess travelling, the company of women, or warming himself by the fire. Fresh butter, clarified butter, milk, jaggery, sugar, daal, amalaki, pomegranate, grapes, ripe bananas, etc., should also not be used. Cardamom, cloves, nutmeg, stimulants, haritaki and dates can be taken. Only foods which are easily digestible, agreeable, lubricating, strengthening and acceptable to the mind should be eaten. Hard, polluted, stale, heating, extremely cold and extremely hot foods should be avoided.

Early morning bathing and fasting, which cause discomfort to the body, should be discarded. Having only one meal a day, not eating at all or eating between meals should be discontinued. Prior to commencing pranayama practice, one should have milk and ghee daily and eat two meals a day, one at noon and one in the evening.

32. On a seat of kusha grass, or deer skin, or tiger skin or a blanket, facing east or north, pranayama should be practised after purifying the nadis.
- 33–44. Chandakapali asked: How is nadi shuddhi (purification of the nadis) to be done? What is its form? I want to listen to all this in detail. O kind-hearted one, be kind and gracious enough to tell me.

Sage Gheranda replied: If air cannot flow through the nadis because they are full of waste products, how can pranayama be perfected, and how can tattwa jnana (subtle knowledge) manifest? That is why one must first perform purification of the nadis, which is of two types: samanu and nirmanu. Purification of the nadis performed along with the bija mantra is called samanu, the one performed with the practice of dhauti karma is called nirmanu. A description of dhauti has already been given in the shatkarmas.

Now listen, Chanda, to the saman technique by which the nadis can be purified.

Sitting on a seat, a yogi should assume padmasana and perform guru nyasa (rotation of consciousness over different parts of the body). Then according to the directions of the guru, practise purification of the nadis in order to practise pranayama.

Keeping in mind the vayu bija mantra *Yam* यं, inhale through the chandra marga (left nostril), repeating the bija mantra 16 times. In the meditative state one should consider this vayu bija to be the colour of bright smoke. Thus after pooraka (inhalation) through the left nostril, one should perform kumbhaka (holding the breath), repeating the mantra 64 times, and then repeating it 32 times perform rechaka (exhalation) through the right nostril.

Raise agni tattwa (fire element) from the navel centre and meditate on its light associated with earth. Keeping in mind the *Ram* रं bija and repeating this mantra 16 times one should inhale through the surya nadi (right nostril), perform kumbhaka while repeating it up to 64 times and then exhale through the left nostril, repeating the mantra 32 times.

Focus the mind on the image of the moon at the nosetip and repeat the bija mantra *Tham* ठं 16 times while inhaling through the left nostril. One should retain the breath in sushumna, repeating the bija mantra *Vam* वं 64 times. One should fix the mind on the flow of nectar from the moon at the tip of the nose and clean all the nadis with it. Then one should exhale through the right nostril by repeating the *Lam* लं bija mantra 32 times.

- 45–46. After purifying the nadis, sit in a steady asana (posture) and prepare for pranayama. There are eight types of pranayama: sahita, surya bheda, ujjayi, sheetali, bhastrika, bhramari, moorchha and kevali.

47. Sahita pranayama is of two types: sagarbha and nigarbha. In sagarbha pranayama, bija mantra is used; nigarbha pranayama is practised without bija mantra.
- 48–53. First I will tell you the technique of sagarbha pranayama. Sit in sukhāsana, facing east or north and meditate on red-coloured Brahman, full of rajas guna. Inhale through the left nostril with japa of *A ॐ* bija mantra 16 times. After the end of the inhalation and before the beginning of kumbhaka, apply uddiyana bandha. Then retain the breath up to a count of 64 with japa of the *U ॐ* bija mantra and meditate on dark coloured Hari (Krishna), full of sattwa guna. Then exhale, repeating the bija mantra *M ॐ* 32 times while meditating on fair-complexioned Shiva, full of tamas guna. Then inhale through the right nostril, retain the breath and exhale through the left nostril repeating the bija mantras in the same manner as above, practising alternate nostril breathing again and again. After inhalation, until the end of kumbhaka, close both nostrils using the thumb and the little fingers; do not engage the index finger and middle finger.
- 54–56. Nigarbha pranayama is practised without bija mantras; the left hand moves on the left knee (to keep count) of the pranayama consisting of inhalation, retention and exhalation from 1 to 100. The highest pranayama has 20 counts, the medium 16 and the lowest 12. Thus pranayama has three wings. The lowest gives birth to heat or perspiration; through the middle count trembling of the body (especially the spine) is achieved, and by the highest, the practitioner is lifted up from the earth and travels in space. These three (experiences) should all be considered as symptoms of mastery.
57. Through the practice of pranayama, travel in space, elimination of diseases and awakening of kundalini

is achieved. Bliss manifests in the mind through pranayama and one becomes happy.

58–69. Sahita kumbhaka has been described, now listen to surya bheda. First, breathe in deeply through surya nadi according to capacity, retain the breath with jalandhara bandha until the whole body, from the nails to the hair on the head, begins to sweat.

Prana, apana, samana, vyana, udana, naga, koorma, krikara, devadatta and dhananjaya are the ten prana vayus. Prana is in the heart, apana is in the anus, samana is in the navel, udana is in the throat, and vyana is in the whole entire body; these are the five main pranas. Naga, etc., are the five sub-prana vayus. Naga (manifests) in belching, koorma in opening of the eyes, krikara in hunger, devadatta in yawning, and the one which does not leave the body even on death is called dhananjaya. From naga comes consciousness, from koorma comes blinking, from krikara comes thirst and hunger, from devadatta comes yawning and from dhananjaya, which never leaves, comes the voice.

At the time of practice, separating these prana vayus, raise samana vayu, which comes from the root of the navel, with the help of the surya nadi and then slowly exhale through the left nostril. Again inhale through the right nostril, hold the breath as per the technique and exhale through the left nostril. This process should be repeated time and again. This very process is called surya bheda. This pranayama, surya bheda, is the destroyer of old age and death. It awakens kundalini and the fire inside the body is activated. O Chanda, I have narrated to you the best pranayama known as surya bheda.

70–73. Inhaling external air through both the nostrils, suck the internal air through the heart and throat and hold it by means of kumbhaka. Then emptying the mouth, apply jalandhara bandha, hold the breath

to capacity in a manner which does not cause any obstruction. This is called ujjayi kumbhaka. With it all works are perfected. Diseases from kapha imbalances, nervous and digestive disorders do not manifest. Diseases like ama vata, tuberculosis, respiratory disorders, fever and spleen-related disorders are cured. If ujjayi kumbhaka is perfected, old age and death are also managed.

74–75. Fill the abdomen by sucking air through the tongue. Retain the air for a short while with the help of kumbhaka and expel it through both nostrils. This beneficial sheetali pranayama should always be practised. By practising it, digestive disorders and kapha-pitta disorders do not manifest.

76–78. Breathe in and out forcefully through both nostrils, filling and emptying the abdomen like the bellows of a blacksmith. Repeat this 20 times then hold the breath. The learned ones have named it bhastrika kumbhaka. It should be repeated thus thrice. By practising it, no disease or disorder takes place and a disease-free state is increased day by day.

79–84. After midnight, in a quiet place where no sound of any living being is heard, a yogi should practise inhalation and breath retention while closing the ears with the hands. One listens to internal sounds with the right ear. First the sound of a grasshopper, then the sound of a flute, then the thundering of clouds, then the sound of a cymbal or small drum, then the humming sound of bees, a bell, a big gong, a trumpet, a kettledrum, a mridanga or a drum, a dundubhi, etc., are heard.

Thus, by practising daily, one has the experience of listening to various sounds and the sound of the shabda (sacred sound or vibration) is produced in anahata. In its resonance comes the internal vision of the twelve-petalled lotus in the heart. With the merging of the mind into the flame, one attains the

lotus feet of Lord Vishnu. Thus by perfecting bhramari kumbhaka, one attains the siddhi of samadhi.

Dhyana is eight times superior to japa, tapas (austerity) is eight times superior to dhyana, and music is eight times superior to tapas. There is nothing greater than music.

85. Perform breath retention comfortably. Take the mind away from material things and focus it on the eyebrow centre, merging it with the atman. By perfecting moorchha kumbhaka bliss is certainly attained.

- 86–98. The soul of every living being repeats *Ham* with each exhalation and *So* with each inhalation. Every human being takes 21,600 breaths during one day and night. This is called (*Hamso* or *Soham*) ajapa gayatri. Every living being always keeps on repeating this mantra. The air goes in and out through three places: mooladhara, the heart lotus and the two nostrils. The length of the gross body acquired due to one's karma is 96 angulas (finger-widths) and the length of the natural outgoing air is 12 angulas. When singing, the breath is 16 angulas long, while eating 20 angulas, while walking 24 angulas, during sleep 30 angulas, during sexual intercourse 36 angulas and during exercise even more.

If the length of the natural exhalation is reduced, life is increased. Life expectancy decreases when the length (of exhaled air) is increased. It follows that death does not occur while prana vayu exists in the body. When the prana vayu is spontaneously kept in the body, it is known as kevala kumbhaka.

Throughout life living beings spontaneously keep on repeating the ajapa mantra, yogis must do it consciously. In kevali kumbhaka there is no regular respiration. (If the rate of reduction of respiration) is doubled, then manonmani (extreme bliss) takes place.

Drawing the air through the nostrils, just spontaneously suspend the breath, performing this breath retention known as kevali up to 64 times on the first day.

Kevali kumbhaka should be practised daily eight times (once every three hours) or practised five times as I specify: in the early morning, noon, twilight, midnight and in the fourth quarter of the night. Or practise three times at the three sandhyas (at sunrise, noon and at sunset). Until this practice is perfected, keep on increasing the scale by five times along with ajapa gayatri. One who perfects pranayama and kevali is called a real knower of yoga. Having mastered kevali kumbhaka, what cannot be achieved in this world?

Chapter Six

1. Meditation is of three types: sthoola dhyana, jyoti dhyana and sukshma dhyana. Sthoola dhyana (gross or physical meditation) is that in which one meditates on the physical form (of one's ishta deva or deity). Jyotirmaya dhyana (dhyana full of light) is that in which one meditates on or visualizes the brilliant flame form of Brahman. Sukshma dhyana (subtle meditation) is on Brahman as bindu, as kundalini shakti.
- 2-8. Focus the attention on the heart. Contemplate a vast ocean filled with nectar. In the middle there is an island full of precious jewels and the sand is also made up of crushed gems. On all four sides there are neepa trees laden with flowers. Surrounding these trees, like trenches on the island, are rows of flowering trees such as malati, mallika, jati, kesara, champaka, parijata and padma, and their fragrance spreads to every corner of the island. In the middle of the island a tree by the name of kalpa vriksha exists. Its four branches represent the

four Vedas. This tree is laden with beautiful fruits and flowers. All over the island the melodious voice of the cuckoo (kokila) and the humming sound of the black honeybee are heard.

There is a terrace with a throne decorated with precious gems. Contemplate your ishta devata sitting on that throne. Meditate on your chosen deity according to the technique taught by your guru. Focus with one-pointedness on that form and various items like the clothing, mala, etc. that your ishta is wearing. With this technique, learned people constantly meditate on the gross or physical form of the divine or their guru.

- 9–15. In the region of sahasrara there is a large lotus which has one thousand petals and in its central region there is a very small lotus with twelve petals. These petals are white in colour and full of brightness. The bija (seed) mantras which enhance the beauty of these twelve petals are: *Ha* ह, *Sa* स, *Ksha* क्ष, *Ma* म, *La* ल, *Va* व, *Ra* र, *Yum* युं *Ha* ह, *Sa* स, *Kha* ख and *Phrem* फ्रें. In the centre of the lotus there are three lines, *A* अ, *Ka* क and *Tha* थ, with colours. These three lines join to form a triangle. The symbolic *shabda*, or sound, of the angles of this triangle are *Ham* हं, *Lam* लं and *Ksham* क्शं. In the centre (of the triangle) stands the pranava mantra *Aum* ॐ.

Visualize a pair of swans, the symbol of the guru's sandals, sitting in the centre of the thousand-petalled lotus in the symbolic form of light (bindu) and sound (nada). The guru sitting in the white lotus has two hands and three eyes. He is wearing white clothes and a garland made of white flowers and on his left side is Shakti adorned in red. Siddhi (perfection) is attained in sthoola dhyana by meditating on the guru in this manner.

- 16–17. In mooladhara, kundalini exists in the form of a serpent. The soul (jivatma) resides here in the form

of the flame of a lamp. Meditating here on the luminous Supreme Soul itself is tejo dhyana, i.e. jyoti dhyana.

The pranava jyoti or flame exists in between the two eyebrows and in the upper portion of the mind. Meditating on that blazing flame itself is called tejo dhyana.

- 18–22. O Chanda, you have heard about tejo dhyana (jyoti dhyana), now I shall describe sukshma dhyana. If by great good fortune the kundalini shakti is awakened, it unites with the atma or soul, rises above the eye sockets and travels the raja marga, but it is not seen because of its subtleness and restlessness.

Practising shambhavi mudra, a yogi should meditate (on kundalini). This is called sukshma dhyana, which is extremely secret and is not accessible even to the gods.

Jyoti dhyana is one hundred times superior to sthoola dhyana and sukshma dhyana is one hundred thousand times superior to jyoti dhyana. O Chanda! I have told you about this extremely non-accessible dhyana yoga. One attains self-realization by perfecting supreme meditation.

Chapter Seven

- 1–4. Supreme yoga in the form of samadhi is attained by great good fortune. The only recipients are those who are the disciples of the guru and who receive the guru's grace. Only that yogi should be considered as a deserving candidate for the practice of samadhi who has knowledge and experience of (spiritual) education from the guru regarding the soul or self and whose awakening of mind increases day by day. A yogi is liberated by separating the mind from the body and making it one with the Supreme Self. This is samadhi, freedom from all (known) states of consciousness. I am not separate from Brahman, but

I am Brahman only. I am not full of sorrow, but I am the form of truth-consciousness-bliss (satchidananda) and blessed with the nature of an eternally liberated soul.

- 5–6. Shambhavi and bhramari, khechari and yoni mudras respectively accomplish the four states of dhyana, nada, rasananda and laya siddhi. The fifth is bhakti yoga and manomoorcha is the sixth, constituting raja yoga. These six are now described.
- 7–8. Adopting shambhavi mudra, see the atma, soul or self, and then perceiving Brahman, fix the mind in bindu. Merge the soul in the eternal space, merging the space with jivatma (the individual soul) and jivatma with Paramatma (the Supreme Self). With this the yogi becomes ever blissful and enters into samadhi.
- 9–10. Taking the air in at a slow speed, doing bhramari pranayama, expel the air very slowly on exhalation. While exhaling, a sound similar to the humming of a black bee is produced. Wherever this nada (sound) is taking place, engage the mind there. This is (nada) samadhi arising with the bliss of ‘I am That’.
11. When khechari mudra is performed and the tongue is folded upward, then by the practice of this simple yogic practice, samadhi is perfected.
- 12–13. Assuming yoni mudra, a yogi should create the feeling of shakti in himself and unite blissfully with Paramatma. Thereafter, established in blissful oneness, one becomes one with Brahman and realizes ‘I am Brahman’. This is non-dual samadhi (called laya siddhi yoga samadhi).
- 14–15. In one’s heart, with supreme delight and utmost devotion, one should think of the form of one’s ishta deva or deity. With this come tears of sheer bliss, the body is thrilled, the mind becomes free of sensations, is one-pointed and experiences samadhi and manonmanee.

16. Practising manomoorchha kumbhaka, making the mind one-pointed, the yogi should meditate on atman, thus the union with Paramatma (Supreme Self) is attained in samadhi.
- 17–23. O Chanda! Thus I have explained samadhi as a symbol of liberation (mukti). This is raja yoga samadhi, synonymous with the attainment of union with atma gained in the unmani sahaja (spontaneous no-mind) states. Indeed these should be understood as samadhi.

Lord Vishnu is in water, Vishnu is in the earth, Vishnu is on the mountain top and Vishnu is in the flames of fire. Thus this entire universe is indeed pervaded by Lord Vishnu. All living creatures that move on the earth or in the sky, trees, bushes, creepers, grass, oceans, mountains, etc., of this animate and inanimate universe are all Brahman. A yogi sees everyone in the self, and the self, in everyone. Considering the conscious eternal soul, atma chaitanya, or self inside the body as separate from the body, one becomes free from worldly attachments and passions.

Thus, leaving aside all attachments with the body, son, wife, relations, wealth and possessions, attain samadhi. This layamrita tattwa (essence immersed in nectar) has been declared by Lord Shiva. This should be understood as a brief on liberation or salvation, which is difficult to attain. O Chanda! Knowing this samadhi, one is not reborn in this earthly dimension.

Glossary

Adhara – basis or receptacle, that which supports the body.

Advaita – non-duality.

Agni – fire.

Agni tattwa – fire element; one of the pancha tattwas or five elements of nature.

Aham Brahmasmi – ‘I am Brahman’; one of the four great vedic statements used by a meditator as an aid in reaching the supreme state of existence. See Mahavakya.

Ahamkara – egoism or self-conceit; ‘I am’-ness, self-consciousness. See Antahkarana.

Ahimsa – absence of violence from within; non-violence; one of the yamas as described in Sage Patanjali’s *Yoga Sutras*.

Ajapa japa – continuous, spontaneous repetition of mantra; meditation practice in which mantra is coordinated with breath; a powerful technique for sense withdrawal which can induce concentration and deep meditation.

Ajna chakra – psychic pranic centre situated in the region of the medulla oblongata at the top of the spinal column in the midbrain; seat of intuition or inner pure awareness; the third eye; centre of individual consciousness, which enables mind-to-mind communication with the external guru and one’s inner self. See Chakra.

Akasha – element of ether, space, sky.

Akasha tattwa – space element; one of the pancha tattwas or five elements of nature.

Akashi dharana – ‘concentration on space or ether’, one of the five concentration practices described by Sage Gheranda under the category of mudra.

Amrita – ‘deathless’, immortality; nectar of immortality produced in bindu visarga. See Bindu.

Ananda siddhi – mastery over bliss.

Anahata chakra – psychic/pranic centre situated in the region of the heart and cardiac plexus; related with emotions; the seat of the soul in human life. See Chakra.

Anahad nada – unstruck or unbeaten sound heard by yogis.

Anandamaya kosha – sheath or body of bliss and supramental consciousness. See Kosha.

Angula – finger-width.

Annamaya kosha – first layer of human existence; sheath or body of matter; the sphere of existence created by food, maintained by food and which ultimately becomes food.

Antahkarana – literally means ‘inner tool’; fourfold inner organ of the consciousness; See Manas, Chitta, Buddhi, Ahamkara.

Antah – inner, internal.

Antardhauti – internal cleansing techniques of shatkarma, divided into four classifications: vatsara, varisara, agnisara and bahishkrita.

Antardrishti – inner vision.

Antartrataka – inner or internal trataka, a concentration practice of gazing at an internal image.

Antaranga dhyana – inner meditation. Awareness of the experiences created in the subtle mental levels.

Apana vayu – downward flowing pranic current operating in the lower abdominal region; responsible for elimination through the excretory and reproductive organs. See Pancha prana vayu.

Apara – lower, material, worldly.

Apas tattwa – water element; one of the pancha tattwas or five elements of nature.

Artha – literally means ‘object’. Also refers to wealth. See Purushartha.

Asana – a specific position of the body used in hatha yoga to channel prana, open the chakras and remove energy blocks. In raja yoga, a physical posture in which one is at ease and in harmony with oneself. See Ghatastha yoga.

Ashtanga yoga – eight limbs of raja yoga described by Sage Patanjali in the *Yoga Sutras*: yama, niyama, asana, pranayama, pratyahara, dharana, dhyana, samadhi.

Atma – soul or spirit.

Atma shuddhi – inner purity.

Atma tattwa – the soul.

Atmajnana – knowledge of the self and its realization.

Atmapuri – abode of the soul.

Aum, Om – the universal cosmic mantra representing the four states of consciousness; the sound representing the first formation from formless existence; bija mantra of ajna chakra.

Bahiranga dhyana – external meditation, awareness of the experiences created by the universe and senses.

Bandha – binding, tying; psycho-muscular energy locks which close the pranic exits (like throat, anus, etc.); psychic locks that concentrate the flow of energy in the body at one point or plexus; a sub-category of mudra.

Bhagavad Gita – ‘divine song’; Lord Krishna’s discourse to his disciple Arjuna delivered on the battlefield of Kurukshetra at the commencement of the great Mahabharata war; it is one of the source books of Hindu philosophy, containing the essence of the Upanishads and yoga.

Bhakta – devotee.

Bhakti – complete devotion to the higher reality of life; channelling of emotion to a higher force.

Bhakti bhava – feeling of devotion.

Bhakti yoga – the yoga of devotion.

Bhalarandhra – the forehead or the depression above the nose just above the eyebrow centre.

Bhava – intense inner attitude or feeling.

Bheda – pass through, pierce.

Bhoga – enjoyment, delight; experience and craving for pleasure.

Bhrumadhya – the eyebrow centre.

Bija – seed mantra.

Bindu – a point; a drop; a subtle cosmic centre which manifests and in the end merges into subtle cosmic existence; the drop of specially secreted fluid at the top back of the head; semen. See Amrita.

Bindu visarga – centre or source of individual creation from where psychic vibrations first emanate.

Brahma – the god of creation; member of the Hindu trinity.

Brahman – limitless existence; Supreme Soul or Self.

Brahma avastha – the supreme state.

Brahma nadi – energy flow within the innermost layer of sushumna nadi.

Brahmacharya – one of the niyamas; self-restraint, celibacy; state of living in constant awareness of Brahman.

Brahmadvara – the door between the para and apara worlds; where kundalini enters sushumna nadi.

Brahma jnana – knowledge or self-realization of Brahman, the all-pervading reality.

Brahmamuhurta – the two hours around dawn, between 4 and 6 am, best suited to yoga sadhana.

Brahmarandhra – the aperture to higher consciousness at the crown of the head through which the soul of a yogi passes in the final samadhi. Sometimes called kapalarandhra; the fontanelle.

Brahmi vritti – the flow of consciousness and energy leading to realization of Brahman. See Vritti.

Buddhi – intellect, discrimination; aspect of mind closest to pure consciousness. See Antahkarana.

Chakra – wheel, vortex; centre of energy; psychic centre; distinct point for concentration related with endocrine glands; field of energy activated by specific practices of

hatha yoga; the human scale of evolution ranges from mooladhara chakra to sahasrara. See Mooladhara chakra, Swadhisthana chakra, Manipura chakra, Anahata chakra, Vishuddhi chakra, Ajna chakra, Sahasrara chakra.

Chandra nadi – pranic current connected with the left nostril and the lunar force, another name for ida nadi.

Chandra shakti – lunar energy.

Chetana – consciousness, particularly the conscious mind.

Chidakasha – psychic space in front of the closed eyes, just behind the forehead.

Chintan – deep and sincere thinking.

Chitta – individual consciousness, includes subconscious and unconscious layers of mind; one of the twenty-four elements constituting mind; part of the antahkarana. Its functions are memory, thinking, concentration, attention and enquiry. See Antahkarana.

Chitta shakti – internal, emotional and intellectual energy; also known as chandra shakti.

Chitta vritti – modification of the consciousness.

Dakini – the goddess of the skin, the goddess governing the sense of touch.

Dasya – servant; slave.

Dehamukta – liberated soul.

Devadatta vayu – minor prana which provides for the intake of extra oxygen in a tired body by causing a yawn, linked with apana vayu; see Upa prana. See Pancha prana vayu. See Prana.

Devadeham – a divine, lustrous, brilliant and light body like that of a god.

Devata – god.

Dhairya – patience.

Dhananjaya vayu – minor prana responsible for decomposition of the body after death; related to vyana vayu. See Upa prana. See Pancha prana vayu. See Prana.

Dharana – holding the mind to one point; practice of concentration; sixth stage of Sage Patanjali's ashtanga yoga.

Dharma – quality, duty, righteous path; inner nature. See Purushartha.

Dharmacharana – the conduct of dharma.

Dhatu – seven constituents of the body: blood, bone, marrow, fat, semen, skin and flesh.

Dheerat – establishing mental patience by withdrawing the mind from the senses.

Dhyana – meditation; one-pointedness of mind through extended concentration; state of continuous dynamic consciousness without obstruction. See Ghatastha yoga.

Divya drishti – inner vision, divine vision.

Dosha – three humours of the body; see Kapha, Pitta, Vata.

Drashta – the witness.

Dridhata – firm, unshaken.

Drishti – seeing, viewing; knowing, knowledge; eye, faculty of seeing, sight.

Dvaita – duality.

Ekachitta dhyana – one-pointed meditation.

Ekagrata – one-pointed awareness.

Ekanta – solitary; peace and stability.

Ghata – body, pitcher or pot.

Ghatastha yoga – yoga of Sage Gheranda based on the body.

Its seven limbs are: shatkarma, asana, mudra, pratyahara, pranayama, dhyana, samadhi.

Gheranda – a rishi and siddha yogi whose yogic teachings are comprised of seven limbs; author of *Gheranda Samhita*. See Ghatastha yoga.

Goraksha Ashtakam – yogic treatise written by Sage Gorakhnath describing six limbs of yoga.

Granthi – ‘knot’, psychic/pranic block in the subtle body.

Guna – the three component qualities of Prakriti: sattwa, rajas and tamas. *Tamas* is the quality of inertia, *rajas* of activity and *sattwa* of luminosity and balance.

Guru nyasa – also anga nyasa; rotation of consciousness around different parts of the body, according to the instructions of the guru, so that any tension is released; includes the repetition of mantras and visualization of the part in chidakasha.

Guru paduka – the sandals of the guru, used as objects of worship in meditation.

Ham – bija mantra of akasha tattwa, and therefore also of vishuddhi chakra.

Hari – a name of Vishnu; the Sun; the omnipotent and omniscient Ishwara.

Harischandra – name of a king of the solar dynasty who was famous for his liberality, probity and unflinching adherence to truth. He was put on ‘fire’ through tests by sage Vishvamitra to prove his noble qualities. Finally, the worthy king was elevated to heaven along with his subjects.

Hatharatnavali – a treatise on hatha yoga authored by the great yoga exponent Srinivasa Bhatta in which four limbs of yoga are given.

Hatha yoga – yoga of balancing the *prana* (energy) in ida and pingala nadis so that sushumna nadi opens, enabling samadhi experiences; science of yoga which purifies the whole physical body by means of shatkarma, asana, pranayama, mudra, bandha, concentration as a prelude to raja yoga and samadhi.

Hatha Yoga Pradipika – Yogi Swatmarama’s treatise on hatha yoga in which four limbs are given.

Iccha – will; desire.

Ida nadi – major nadi criss-crossing the spine and the major chakras leaving mooladhara chakra from the left and entering ajna chakra from the left, through which shakti governing the mental processes flows. Ida nadi is stimulated by breathing through the left nostril and is connected with the right side of the brain. See Chandra nadi.

Ishta devata – personal deity, one’s personal symbol of the Supreme; the form or vision of one’s preferred divinity or chosen form of God.

Jagrat – wakefulness; the conscious realm; state of consciousness related to the senses and the phenomenal material universe.

Jala tattwa – the water element; one of the pancha tattwas or five elements of nature.

Japa – continuous repetition of mantra.
Jatharagni – digestive fire.
Jignasu – seeker.
Jivanmukta – liberated soul.
Jivatma – individual self.
Jnana – knowledge.
Jnanendriyas – organs of sensory knowledge: ears, skin, eyes, tongue and nose.
Jyotirmaya dhyana – a meditation full of light, in which one meditates on or visualizes the brilliant flame form of Brahma.
Kama – sensual gratification, passion, desire, lust. See Purushartha.
Kalpa vriksha – wish-fulfilling tree; a psychic centre activated when anahata chakra is awakened, resulting in the ability to materialize what is desired.
Kamadeva – the god of love, Cupid.
Kapha – one of the three doshas or humours; mucus, phlegm.
Karana sharira – the causal body.
Karma – action; law of cause and effect.
Karmakshetra – field of activity.
Karmendriyas – organs of action; vocal cords, hands, feet, genitals and anus.
Kavarga – the five consonants in a sequence beginning with ‘ka’.
Kaya kalpa – intensive purification practice.
Kham Brahma – space element; space itself is Brahman.
Khecharatva – moving in space (Brahman).
Kheer – rice pudding made with milk.
Koorma vayu – minor prana responsible for opening and closing the eyes, blinking; related to udana vayu. See Upa prana. See Pancha prana vayu. See Prana.
Kosha – body or realm of experience; five sheaths covering the soul. See Annamaya kosha, Manomaya kosha, Pranamaya kosha, Vijnanamaya kosha, Anandamaya kosha.
Krikara vayu – one of the minor pranas of the body which governs hunger; related with prana vayu. See Upa prana. See Pancha prana vayu. See prana.

Kriya – activity; dynamic yogic practice.

Kriya yoga – a series of techniques designed to speed up human evolution; part of kundalini yoga; kundalini yoga is the broad philosophy and kriya yoga is an ancient and powerful method needing guru's guidance for successful practice.

Kumbhaka – breath retention.

Kundalini – spiritual energy; man's spiritual energy, capacity and consciousness, lying dormant in mooladhara chakra and may be awakened through yogic practices. See Kundalini shakti. See Kundalini yoga.

Kundalini shakti – also known as 'serpent power'; man's potential energy lying dormant in mooladhara chakra, which passes through sushumna nadi when awakened.

Kundalini yoga – philosophy and practices expounding the awakening of potential energy and inherent consciousness within the human body and mind.

Laghava – lightness.

Lam – bija mantra of prithvi tattwa, and of mooladhara chakra.

Laya – dissolution.

Loka – level or realm of existence; world; dimension.

Mahabaho – is 'he who has power in his arms', 'he who protects his people and looks after them'; epithet of a king or hero.

Mahaprana – prana in its cosmic, unmanifest aspect.

Mahavakya – the four great statements of the Upanishads which, if meditated on, can give realization: 1. Prajnanam Brahma: Consciousness is Brahman, 2. Aham Brahmasmi: I am Brahman, 3. Tat Twam Asi: You are That, 4. Ayam Atma Brahma: The soul is Brahman.

Manas – finite mind, rational mind; that part of the mind connected with thought and counter-thought; that part of the mind connected with sense perceptions. See Antahkarana.

Manas shakti – mental energy.

Mandala – circular pictorial representation; an expanded form of yantra.

Mandukya Upanishad – ancient upanishad explaining the relationship of the mantra *Aum* with consciousness.

Manipura chakra – literally means ‘city of jewels’; psychic and pranic centre behind the navel within the spinal column; corresponding to the solar plexus in the physical body; related with willpower. See Chakra.

Manomaya kosha – mental sheath or body. See Kosha.

Manomoorcha – union with the *Paramatma* (Supreme Self); the mind becoming unconscious.

Marut siddhi – mastery of the air element; mastery of the mind.

Maya – illusion; the veiling and projecting power of manifest shakti; the illusory nature of the phenomenal world; the creative ability of Brahman; to be composed of.

Mitahara – balanced, moderate diet.

Moksha – liberation from the cycles of birth and death and the illusion of maya. See Purushartha.

Mooladhara chakra – basic psychic and pranic centre in the human body and the evolutionary platform where kundalini shakti emerges; situated in the perineal floor in men and the cervix in women; connected to the coccygeal plexus. See Chakra.

Mooladhara pinda – a point near mooladhara chakra from which many nadis emanate.

Mouna – silence; remaining without speaking for a specific period of time.

Mudra – literally ‘gesture’; physical, mental and psychic attitude which expresses and channels cosmic energy. Within the broad category of mudras, Sage Gheranda has included bandhas and dharanas. See Ghatastha yoga.

Mumukshu – a seeker of liberation.

Muni – an ascetic; literally means ‘silent one’.

Murti – image; symbol; statue.

Nada – subtle sound vibration; the vibration created by the union of shiva and shakti tattwas.

Nadanubhooti – experience of nada in meditation.

Nadanusandhana – enquiry or investigation into unstruck

(*anahad*) sounds; concentration on inner sound used in *bhramari*.

Nada yoga – hearing internal sound in a state of *dharana*, concentration, and *dhyana*, meditation.

Nadi – flow; subtle channel in the pranic body, conducting the flow of shakti; comparable to the meridians of acupuncture. According to yoga there are 72,000 nadis in the body. Out of these there are ten main ones: sushumna, ida, pingala, brahma, koorma, shakti, saraswati, brahmaputra, kaveri and lakshmi. See *Ida nadi*, *Pingala nadi* and *Sushumna nadi*. See *Pranamaya kosha*.

Naga vayu – a minor prana of the body; energy governing belching; related with *samana* vayu. See *Upa prana*. See *Prancha prana* vayu. See *Prana*.

Nidra – sleep; unconscious realm.

Nirbija avastha – seedless state.

Nirlipta – state of disinterest, a state of being unattached; non-involvement of the mind.

Nirmala – pure, sacred.

Nishchala samadhi – unshakeable samadhi.

Nivritti – renunciation of the external world and *vrittis*.

Nivritti marga – path of introversion, of identifying one's real self.

Niyama – observances or rules of personal discipline to render the mind tranquil in preparation for meditation.

Nyasa – technique prescribed for purifying the nadis prior to commencing *pranayama*, involving rotation of consciousness around the parts of the body using mantra and visualization.

Paduka – sandal.

Pancha dharana – five concentration practices.

Pancha kosha – five sheaths. See *Kosha*.

Pancha makara – the five practices of *kaulachara tantra*: *mamsa*, *madhya*, *matsya*, *mudra*, *maithuna*, which literally mean meat, wine, fish, grain and sexual intercourse.

Pancha prana vayu – five energy flows in the human body: *prana*, *apana*, *samana*, *udana* and *vyana* which regulate

and coordinate the various organs and systems of the body.
See Prana. See Upa prana.

Pancha tattwa – the five elements of nature: earth, water, fire, air and ether.

Pancha vayu – see Pancha prana vayu.

Para – supreme.

Para jnana – highest knowledge or realization; another term for brahma jnana. See Brahma jnana.

Para nada – unmanifest sound; transcendental vibration.
See Nada.

Paramatma – Supreme Soul; an unlimited existence.

Parananda – transcendental bliss.

Pingala nadi – major nadi which emerges from the right side of mooladhara opposite ida and intersects each of the chakras before reaching the right side of ajna. Also associated with the mundane realm of experience and externalized awareness. Pingala is stimulated by breathing through the right nostril and is connected with the left side of the brain.

Pitta – one of the three doshas or humours; bile.

Pooraka khumbaka – breathing in and holding the breath inside.

Prakriti – nature; manifest and unmanifest energy; creative energy manifesting as sattwa, rajas and tamas. See Guna.
See Samkhya.

Pralaya – destruction.

Pramana – evidence or right notion. See Vritti.

Prana – vital energy force sustaining life and creation, permeating the whole of creation; also the name of one of the five major energy flows in a person. Its jurisdiction is between the throat and the diaphragm. It maintains the lungs, heart, breathing, blood, and circulation. See Pancha prana vayu. See Upa prana.

Prana shakti – dynamic solar force governing the dimension of matter; energy flow related to externalization of mind; the force of prana. See Pingala nadi.

Prana vidya – knowledge and control of prana; a healing technique involving awareness and movement of prana.

Pranamaya kosha – energy sheath or vital pranic body composed of chakras and nadis and directly affecting emotions. See Kosha. See Nadi. See Chakra.

Pranava – the *Aum (Om)* mantra.

Pranayama – series of techniques using the breath to regulate, control and expand the flow of prana in the body. See Ghatastha yoga.

Pranotthana – pranic awakening, the awakening of the pranas in the different nadis and chakras.

Prasad – a gift from the guru or higher power; usually in the form of food.

Pratyahara – drawing back, retreat; withdrawal and emancipation of the mind from the domination of the senses and sensual objects; stopping the flow of thoughts towards external things and reversing its direction; the state of internalization.

Pratyaksha – present before the eyes; visible, perceptible, clear; immediate, real; corporeal.

Pratyaya – samskara or impression in the field of consciousness.

Pravritti – involvement with the vrittis of the mind.

Pravritti marga – path of extroversion; path of action in life in worldly society or according to the nature of the world.

Prithvi tattwa – the earth element; one of the pancha tattwas or five elements of nature.

Punya – virtue.

Puranas – eighteen books consisting of legends and mythological narrations dealing with creation, recreation and the genealogies of sages and rulers.

Purusha – literally, one who dwells in the city (of the body); consciousness; God; male, man.

Purushartha – four worthwhile efforts of a human being: *artha* (wealth), *kama* (love), *dharma* (duty), *moksha* (liberation); efforts to attain a goal.

Rajas – the quality of dynamism; activity; one of the three constituent qualities of nature. See Guna.

Rajo guna – the quality of mobility, activity and dynamism.

Ram – bija mantra of agni tattwa, and of manipura chakra.

Rasgulla – a sweet made from cheese and syrup.

Rechaka – exhalation, emptying of the lungs.

Ritambhara prajna – consciousness pregnant with *ritam*, cosmic truth.

Rudra – one who acquires a fierce form; ishta of manipura chakra; a form of Shiva.

Sadashiva – deity of vishuddhi chakra; always benevolent or auspicious. See Shiva.

Sadhaka – one who practises sadhana; spiritual practitioner; a person who is striving on the spiritual path for self-realization, true reality and cosmic consciousness.

Sadhana – spiritual practice or discipline performed regularly for attainment of inner experience and self-realization.

Sahasrara chakra – ‘thousand-petalled lotus’ at the crown of the head associated with the pituitary gland; centre of transcendental awareness where all four states of consciousness can be experienced: wakefulness, dreaming, sleeping, and beyond.

Sahita – with; combined with something.

Sakhya – a friend; companion.

Samadhi – culmination of meditation, state of oneness of mind with the object of concentration; supramental consciousness; the eighth stage of Sage Patanjali’s ashtanga yoga; attitude of oneness with the Supreme Self; union of the individual or microcosmic consciousness with limitless existence or the macrocosmic consciousness. See Ghatastha yoga.

Samagra drishti – complete vision, equal vision.

Samana vayu – one of the five prana vayus, it is essential for digestion; a sideways moving flow of energy situated between the navel and diaphragm, which augments the pranic force of manipura chakra. See Vayu. See Pancha prana vayu.

Samhita – a collection of hymns, prayers and mantras structured using rules of grammar and tone. They are called stotras, suktas, etc., and are chanted during sacrifice (*yajna*). They are the oldest part of the Vedas.

- Samkhya** – one of the six systems of Indian philosophy; a spiritual science dealing with the twenty-five elements of creation; relating to number, enumerating; the philosophy underlying the tantras. See Purusha. See Prakriti.
- Samsara** – the material world; the phenomenal world; the cycle of life and death.
- Samskara** – mental impression stored in the subtle body and existing as an archetype in the brain.
- Sandhya** – time of confluence of energies; spiritual practice performed at sunrise, noon and sunset.
- Sankalpa** – resolution, willpower, determination or conviction; concept formed in the mind; thought.
- Saptanga yoga** – seven limbs of yoga. The yoga taught in *Gheranda Samhita*.
- Sattwa** – state of luminosity, harmony, equilibrium, steadiness and purity; one of the three constituent qualities of nature. See Guna.
- Sattwic** – pertaining to sattwa.
- Shabda** – the world; sacred sound or vibration; a word.
- Shakti** – power; energy; the female aspect of creation and divinity worshipped by the Shakta sect; counterpart of Shiva; the moving power of nature and consciousness.
- Shakti nadi** – an energy flow which starts from the right side of the anus and goes up to mooladhara and swadhisthana chakras where it joins pingala nadi. See Nadi.
- Shambhavi siddhi** – control over the subtle elements, a psychic power achieved through practising Shambhavi mudra.
- Sharira** – body.
- Shashtanga yoga** – six limbs of yoga.
- Shatkarma** – the six purificatory practices forming the first step or dimension of hatha yoga: *neti*, nasal cleansing, *dhauti*, cleansing of the head and the entire alimentary canal from the mouth to the anus, *basti*, cleansing the large intestine, *nauli*, massaging and strengthening the abdominal muscles and organs, *kapalbhati*, a type of pranayama, and *trataka*, a method of concentrating the mind.

Shiva – benevolent one or auspicious one; state of pure consciousness, both individual and cosmic; name of deity of the Hindu trinity who is entrusted with the work of destruction.

Shodhana – purification; to cleanse or purify.

Shoonya – void; state of transcendental consciousness; space behind the eyebrow centre.

Shuddhi – purification; purity.

Siddha – an adept or perfected person; one who has developed their psychic and pranic capacity to the point of mastery.

Siddhi – perfection; enhanced pranic and psychic capacity; paranormal or supernormal accomplishment; control of mind and prana.

Sloka – verse.

Smriti – memory; that part of the Vedas recorded as the disciples' remembrance of what has been revealed by the great gurus regarding the truth of inner experience, expansion of awareness and evolution of mind.

Soham – mantra which is the subtle sound of the breath; *so* representing cosmic consciousness and *ham* representing individual consciousness, the meaning of *Soham* literally is 'That am I'; its reverse is *Hamso*, both mantras are often used in ajapa japa. See Ajapa japa.

Sthairya – steadiness.

Sthoola sharira – gross body, physical body

Sukshma – subtle.

Surya nadi – another name for pingala nadi; energy flow connected with the sun and the breath in the right nostril. See Pingala nadi.

Surya shakti – solar energy.

Sushumna nadi – main nadi in the centre of the spinal cord which conducts kundalini shakti, spiritual force, to Sahasrara chakra and is the main energy flow related to transcendental awareness. Sushumna nadi flows when ida and pingala nadis are balanced. See Ida nadi. See Pingala nadi. See Kundalini.

Sutra – thread; aphorism or condensed statement, often of the ancient scriptures.

Swadhisthana chakra – pranic and psychic centre situated at the base of the spinal column and governing the urogenital system; literally means ‘one’s own abode’; centre connected with deep unconscious impressions. See Chakra.

Swapna – subconscious realm; state of dreaming.

Swara – flow of the breath in one or both nostrils; sound or tone.

Swara yoga – science of the breathing cycle; the system of yoga using understanding and management of the breathing cycle as a means to attain self-realization.

Swayambhu linga – the self-illuminated symbol.

Tamo guna – the quality of stability, ignorance or inertia; one of the three constituent qualities of nature.

Tantra – the oldest science and philosophy of man which expands the mind and liberates the potential energy and inner consciousness from matter; also, texts concerning the philosophy and techniques of expansion of mind and liberation of energy, sixty-four in number.

Tapas, tapasya – austerity, penance.

Tattwa – element, primary substance; true or real state.

Tattwa dharana – concentration on the elements.

Tattwa jnana – knowledge of the reality, essence or truth of the human body, mind and soul.

Trigunatmic prakriti – manifest and unmanifest nature consisting of three gunas or qualities.

Tulsidas – the author of one of the versions of the famous epic called the *Ramacharitamanas*, which describes the life of Lord Rama.

Turiya – fourth dimension of consciousness; simultaneous awareness of the conscious, subconscious and unconscious mind which links and transcends them; inner awakening, a state of liberation. See Samadhi.

Udana vayu – pranic current in the area of the throat and face which controls the sensory organs, the movement of the legs, arms and neck, and the activities of the brain;

one of the five major *pranas* (energies) or *vayus* in the body.

Uddipan – shakti behind every physical activity.

Upa prana – the five minor *pranas* or sub-*pranas* in a person.

See Pancha prana vayu. See Prana.

Vaikuntha – the abode of Lord Vishnu.

Vairagya – absence of sensual craving and desires; detachment; supreme dispassion.

Vaishnava – those who worship Vishnu as the supreme reality; pertaining to Lord Vishnu.

Vaishvanara – the waking state, externalized state of mind; the experience while awake.

Vaishvani dharana – another name for Agni dharana. See Agni dharana.

Vajra nadi – second layer of sushumna; also the nadi starting on the left side of the anus governing the sexual organs and processes, the digestive system, and related to the sciatic nerve.

Vam – bija mantra of apas tattwa, and of swadhisthana chakra.

Vasana – seed impression, latent desire.

Vata – one of the three doshas or humours; wind and gas.

Vayu tattwa – the air element; one of the pancha tattwas or five elements of nature.

Vedas – the most ancient texts revealed to the sages and saints of India, explaining and regulating every aspect of life from supreme reality to worldly affairs; four in number: *Rig*, *Yajur*, *Sama*, *Atharva*, which are further divided into the *Samhita*, *Brahmana*, *Aranyaka* and the Upanishads.

Veerya – energy, strength of will, courage; virility; semen.

Veerya siddhi – control over the semen in men.

Vigraha – literally ‘to grasp firmly’; an image which when concentrated upon through mantras or through the devotion and adoration of the worshipper becomes the depicted being itself.

Vijnanamaya kosha – higher mental sheath or body; inner intuitive awareness. See Kosha.

Vikalpa – fancy, imagination, thought or conclusion without factual evidence; counter-thought.

Viloma – inverted, inverse, contrary, opposite; produced in the reverse order.

Viparyaya – misconception.

Virakti – indifference, disinterest.

Vishnu – deity of the Hindu trinity where Brahma is the creator, Vishnu is the preserver and Mahesha (Lord Shiva) is the destroyer.

Vishuddhi chakra – psychic and pranic centre in the spine behind the throat and connected with the cervical plexus, tonsils and thyroid gland; centre for purification and communication. See chakra.

Vritti – mental modification; pattern of individual consciousness.

Vyana vayu – one of the five energy fields or pranas of the body; pranic current pervading the whole body, functioning like an energy reserve; responsible for circulating the energy from food and breathing, regulating muscular movement, aiding in sending impulses to different parts of the body, and causing perspiration and goose flesh.

Yam – bija mantra of vayu tattwa, and of anahata chakra.

Yama – self-restraints, the first stage of ashtanga yoga; a time measure used in yogic literature, equal to three hours.

Yantra – precisely calculated geometric symbol representing specific conformations of shakti and consciousness; visual form of mantra designed for concentration or meditation in order to liberate potential energy and consciousness within an individual.

Yoga Sutras – ancient authoritative text on raja yoga by Sage Patanjali.

Yogatattwa Upanishad – an Upanishad on the topic of kundalini awakening.

Index of Practices

Asana

Baddha padmasana (locked lotus pose)	176
Bhadrasana (gracious pose).....	180
Bhujangasana (cobra pose).....	251
Dhanurasana (bow pose).....	201
Garudasana (eagle pose).....	239
Gomukhasana (cow's face pose).....	196
Gorakshasana (Yogi Gorakhnath's pose).....	215
Guptasana (secret pose)	206
Kati chakrasana (waist rotating pose)	52
Koormasana (tortoise pose).....	229
Kukkutasana (cockerel pose).....	227
Makarasana (crocodile pose)	246
Mandukasana (frog pose)	234
Matsyasana (fish pose)	207
Matsyendrasana (Yogi Matsyendranath's pose).....	210
Mayurasana (peacock pose).....	224
Mritasana (death pose)	203
Muktasana (free pose).....	183
Padmasana (lotus pose).....	174
Paschimottanasana (back stretching pose).....	217
Sankatasana (pose for trouble)	222
Shalabhasana (locust pose)	242
Shavasana, see mritasana	
Siddhasana (accomplished pose).....	169
Simhagarjanasana (roaring lion variation).....	193
Simhasana (lion pose)	191

Sukhasana, see muktasana	
Swastikasana (auspicious pose)	189
Tadasana (palm tree pose)	51
Tiryak bhujangasana (twisting cobra pose)	53
Tiryak tadasana (swaying palm tree pose)	52
Udarakarshanasana (abdominal stretch pose)	54
Ushtrasana (camel pose)	248
Utkatasana (pose for difficulties)	220
Utthan koormasana (upright tortoise pose)	232
Utthan mandukasana (upright frog pose)	235
Utthanpadasana (stretched leg pose)	114
Vatayanasana, see vrikshasana	
Vajrasana (thunderbolt pose)	185
Veerasana (hero's pose)	199
Vrikshasana (tree pose)	237
Vrishasana (bull pose)	241
Yogasana (easy lotus pose)	254

Bandha

Jalandhara bandha (throat lock)	271
Maha bandha (the great lock)	281
Moola bandha (perineum contraction)	265
Uddiyana bandha (abdominal contraction)	277

Dharana

Agneyi dharana (concentration on fire)	295
Ambhasi dharana (concentration on water)	290
Akashi dharana (concentration on space or ether)	304
Parthivi dharana (concentration on earth)	286
Vayviye dharana (concentration on air)	300

Dhyana

Jyoti dhyana (meditation full of light)	477
Sthoola dhyana (gross/physical meditation)	459
Sukshma dhyana (subtle meditation)	480

Mudra

Ashwini mudra (horse mudra)	357
Bhujangini mudra (serpent mudra)	364
Kaki mudra (crow mudra)	360
Khechari mudra (space mudra)	312
Maha bheda mudra (great piercing attitude)	320

Maha mudra (the great attitude)	307
Manduki mudra (frog mudra)	350
Matangini mudra (elephant mudra).....	362
Nabho mudra (sky mudra)	311
Pashinee mudra (noose mudra).....	358
Shambhavi mudra (attitude for arousing superconsciousness)	352
Shakti chalini mudra (attitude of moving the energy)	343
Shanmukhi mudra, see yoni mudra	
Tadagi mudra (water pot mudra)	348
Vajroni mudra (thunderbolt attitude).....	339
Vipareeta karani mudra (inverted psychic attitude).....	324
Yoni mudra (attitude of the source).....	331

Nadi Shuddhi

Nirmanu nadi shuddhi	404
Samanu nadi shuddhi.....	404

Pranayama

Bhastrika pranayama (bellows pranayama).....	435
Bhramari pranayama (humming bee pranayama)	438
Chandra bheda pranayama (moon-piercing pranayama) ..	429
Kevali pranayama	447
Moorchha pranayama (swooning or fainting pranayama) ..	444
Nigarbha pranayama (pranayama without mantra).....	419
Sagarbha pranayama (pranayama with mantra)	413
Sahita pranayama	412
Sheetali pranayama (cooling pranayama)	433
Surya bheda pranayama (sun-piercing pranayama).....	422
Ujjayi pranayama (psychic breath)	430

Pratyahara

Pratyahara.....	371
-----------------	-----

Samadhi

Bhakti yoga samadhi.....	503
Dhyana yoga samadhi.....	495
Laya siddhi samadhi	500
Manomoorchha samadhi	505
Nada yoga samadhi	498
Rasananda samadhi	499

Shatkarma

Agnisara kriya, see vahnisara antar dhauti	
Antar dhauti (internal cleansing).....	42
Bahishkrita antar dhauti (washing the rectum)	66
Basti	107
Bhalbhati, see kapalbhati	
Bhramara nauli (abdominal rotation)	135
Dakshina nauli (right isolation).....	134
Danda dhauti (cleaning with a stick)	87
Danta dhauti (cleaning the head region)	75
Dantamoola dhauti (cleaning the teeth).....	76
Dhauti	41
Hrid dhauti (cleaning the heart region).....	87
Jala basti (water basti)	110
Jala neti (nasal cleansing with water).....	119
Jihvamoola, see jihva shodhana	
Jihva Shodhana (cleaning the tongue)	79
Kapalarandhra dhauti (cleaning the upper region of the head).....	84
Kapalbhati (Bhalbhati)	150
Karnarandhra dhauti (cleaning the ears).....	81
Kunjla kriya (the practice of vomiting water).....	90
Lauliki (Nauli).....	129
Madhyama nauli (central abdominal contraction)	132
Moola shodhana (anal cleansing)	101
Mudra	304
Nauli, see lauliki	
Neti	118
Shankhaprakshalana, see varisara antar dhauti	
Sheetkrama kapalbhati (mucus cleansing)	159
Sthala basti (dry basti).....	113
Sutra neti (nasal cleansing with thread).....	124
Trataka (concentrated gazing)	140
Vahnisara antar dhauti (activating the digestive fire).....	60
Vahnisara kriya (activating the digestive fire).....	130
Vama nauli (left isolation)	133
Vaman dhauti (cleaning by regurgitation)	89
Varisara antar dhauti (cleaning the stomach and intestines with water)	47

Vastra dhauti (cleansing with cloth).....	95
Vatakrama kapalbhati (air cleansing)	151
Vatsara antar dhauti (cleaning the stomach with air)	43
Vyaghra kriya (tiger practice)	93
Vyutkrama kapalbhati (sinus cleansing)	157

General Index

- Agni tattwa, see element, fire
Ahamkara, see ego
Ajna chakra, see chakra
Akasha tattwa, see element, space
Amrita, see nectar
Anahata chakra, see chakra
Anandamaya kosha, see kosha
Annamaya kosha, see kosha
Antahkarana 25, 147
Apana vayu, see vayu
Apas tattwa, see element, water
Asana 2, 30, 165–255;
 baddha padmasana 176;
 bhadrasana 180–183;
 bhujangasana 251–253;
 brahmacharyasana 340;
 definition 165;
 dhanurasana 201–203;
 garudasana 239–241;
 gomukhasana 196–198;
 gorakshasana 215–217;
 guptasana 206–207;
 kati chakrasana 52–53;
 koormasana 229–232;
 kukkutasana 227–229;
 makarasana 246–247;
 mandukasana 234–235;
 matsyasana 207–210;
 matsyendasana 210–215;
 mayurasana 224–227;
 mrirtasana 203–206;
 muktasana 183–185;
 padmasana 174–180;
 paschimottanasana 113,
 217–220;
 poorna shalabhasana
 244–245;
 purpose 165;
 sankatasana 222–223;
 sarvangasana 325–326;
 shalabhasana 242–244;
 shavasana, see asana, mrit-
 asana;
 siddhasana 169–174;
 simhagarjanasana 193–195;
 simhasana 191–193;
 sukhasana, see asana, mukt-
 asana;
 swastikasana 189–190;
 tadasana 51;
 tiryak bhujangasana 53–54;
 tiryak tadasana 52;
 udarakarshanasana 54–55;
 ushtrasana 248–250;
 utkatasana 110, 111, 115,
 220–222;
 utthan koormasana 232–234;
 utthan mandukasana 235–
 236;
 utthanpadasana 114;
 vajrasana 185–188;

- vatayanasana, see asana,
 vrikshasana;
 veerasana 199–200;
 vrikshasana 237–239;
 vrishasana 241–242;
 vogasana 254–255
 Ashtanga yoga 26
 Atma, see soul
 Attachment 371–372
 Awareness 205–206, 468–469;
 internalization 178

 Bandha 260, 264–284;
 jalandhara bandha 271–276;
 maha bandha 281–284;
 moola bandha 265–271;
 uddiyana bandha 130, 136,
 277–280, 416
 Bindu, see chakra
 Brahma 287, 415–416
 Brahmacharya 269, 341–342
 Breath 66–67, 383, 408–409,
 448–451; breath retention
 138, 173, 316, 409–410, 506

 Chakra 136, 321, 509; ajna
 chakra 124, 128, 148, 355,
 518, 523–524; anahata
 chakra 300–301, 416, 461,
 518, 521–522; bindu chakra
 158, 161, 326, 518, 524;
 manipura chakra 65–66,
 137, 280, 297, 326, 518,
 520–521; mooladhara
 chakra 65–66, 148, 170, 172,
 267, 287, 518, 519–520;
 sahasrara chakra 148, 470,
 471–472, 473, 518, 524;
 swadhisthana chakra 65–66,
 291, 518, 520; vishuddhi
 chakra 148, 272, 274, 304,
 326, 518, 522–523
 Chandakapali, King 9–14, 161
 Consciousness 321, 323, 335–
 336, 469, 472; extroversion
 463–464; introversion
 463–464; unconsciousness
 505–506

 Delusion 14–15, 17
 Desire 22
 Dharana 285–306, 466;
 agneyi dharana 295–299;
 ambhasi dharana 290–294;
 askashi dharana 304–306;
 parthivi dharana 286–289
 vayviye dharana 300–303
 Dhyana 3–4, 33, 455–481;
 jyoti dhyana 477–480;
 sthoola dhyana 459–477;
 sukshma dhyana 480–481
 Diet 35–36, 59, 393–399;
 fasting 116
 Digestive system 48, 89
 Discrimination 475
 Disease 35–37, 107, 178–179,
 384; yogic management 179
 Divine vision 124, 128, 148
 Duality 148

 Ear 81, 83
 Ego 17, 372, 469
 Element 148, 406–408;
 air 300, 406; earth 286,
 478–479; fire 295–296, 407;
 ishvara tattwa 462; space
 304–305, 496–497; water 292
 Emotion 37

 Faith 492–493

- Ghatastha yoga 4, 17;
 definition 10–11; process
 15–16, 19; purpose 23; result
 11; seven limbs 26, 137
- Gheranda, Sage 1, 9–14
- God 353, 460, 508, 510
- Gorakhnath, Sage 148
- Grace 491–492
- Guna 469; rajas 415–416;
 sattwa 417; tamas 417–418
- Guru 148, 270, 491–493
- Hatharatnavali 116
- Hatha Yoga Pradipika 95, 115,
 152, 173, 179, 191, 211, 318,
 356
- Ida nadi, see nadi
- Immortality 274, 275–276, 318
- Internalization 177–178
- Jnanendriya, see sense organ
- Kalpa vriksha, see wish-
 fulfilling tree
- Karma 11, 20–21, 109, 291–
 292
- Knowledge 16
- Kosha 367–368, 527–529
 anandamaya kosha 529;
 annamaya kosha 75,
 527–528; manomaya kosha
 75, 528–529; pranamaya
 kosha 75, 150, 528; vijñana-
 maya kosha 529
- Kriya yoga 326
- Kundalini 253, 270–271, 332,
 335–336, 344–347, 481
- Kundalini yoga 136, 280, 283,
 285, 297–298
- Laya yoga 143
- Manipura chakra, see chakra
- Manomaya kosha, see kosha
- Mantra 3, 288, 292, 295, 300,
 304, 406–408, 418–419,
 448–452
- Medicinal plants 77
- Meditation 156, 169, 179–180;
 definition 457–458; process
 504–505; purpose 473–474;
 mind 37, 64, 372; conscious
 291–292; internalization
 310; management 179,
 293, 375–380; subconscious
 291–292, 301; unconscious
 291–292
- Mooladhara chakra, see
 chakra
- Mouna 270
- Mudra 2–3, 31–32, 259, 285,
 307–368;
 ashwini mudra 111, 113,
 357–358;
 bhujangini mudra 364–365;
 kaki mudra 360–362;
 khechari mudra 128, 158,
 312–319;
 maha bheda mudra 320–323;
 maha mudra 307–311;
 manduki mudra 350–351;
 matangini mudra 362–363;
 nabho mudra 311–312;
 pashinee mudra 358–360;
 shakti chalini mudra 343–
 347;
 shambhavi mudra 141, 148,
 352–356;
 shanmukhi mudra, see
 mudra, yoni mudra;

- tadagi mudra 348–350;
 vajroni mudra 339–343;
 vipareeta karani mudra
 324–331;
 yoni mudra 331–338
- Nada 338, 439–443, 498–499
 Nada yoga 83–84
 Nadi 72–73, 118, 161, 188,
 267, 524–527; ida nadi 148,
 177, 525; pingala nadi 148,
 177, 525; sushumna nadi
 310, 525; vajra nadi 187
 Nadi shuddhi 400–411;
 nirmanu nadi shuddhi 161,
 404–405; samanu nadi
 shuddhi 161, 404, 410–411
 Nectar 158, 161, 276, 314,
 318, 324, 327, 351, 500
 Niyama 2
 Non-attachment 512–513
 Non-duality 148, 336–337,
 493–494, 500–502
 Nyasa 405–406
- One-pointedness 260–261,
 457, 509
- Patience 371–374
 Pingala nadi, see nadi
 Prana 2–3, 31–32, 32, 66–68,
 102, 138, 187–188, 275, 277,
 298–299, 323, 327, 368, 383,
 413
 Pranamaya kosha, see kosha
 Prana vayu, see vayu
 Pranayama 3, 32–33, 69–70,
 138, 151, 161, 383–452;
 bhastrika pranayama 435–
 438;
 bhramari pranayama
 438–443, 498;
 chandra bheda pranayama
 429;
 kapalbhata pranayama 56;
 kevali pranayama 447–452;
 moorchha pranayama
 444–446;
 nigarbha pranayama 419–
 421;
 result 421;
 rules 385–399;
 sagarbha pranayama 413–
 419;
 sahita pranayama 412–421;
 sheetal pranayama 433–434;
 surya bheda pranayama
 422–429;
 ujjayi pranayama 430–432
 Pranik healing 298–299
 Pratyahara 3, 32, 371–380,
 465–466
 Prithvi tattwa, see element,
 earth
 Purushartha, see self-effort
- Rajas, rajasic, see guna
 Raja yoga 311
 Reincarnation 21, 512–513
 Relaxation 205–206
 Rudra 299
- Sadhana 13, 18, 289
 Sahasrara chakra, see chakra
 Samadhi 4, 33, 335, 485–513;
 bhakti yoga samadhi
 503–505; dhyana yoga
 samadhi 495–497; laya
 siddhi samadhi 500–502;
 manomoorchha samadhi

505–506; nada yoga samadhi
 498–499; rasananda samadhi
 499–500; samadhi yoga
 mahatmya 507–513
 Samana vayu, see vayu
 Samskara 471–472
 Sattwa, sattwic, see guna
 Self-analysis 376–377
 Self-effort 18, 475–476
 Self-realization 4, 10, 13, 143,
 169, 280, 355–356, 481
 Sense organ 75, 373
 Shakti 332
 Shatkarma 2, 30, 34–161, 37,
 40;
 adho trataka 143;
 agnisara kriya, see shat-
 karma, vahnisara antar
 dhauti;
 antaranga trataka 141,
 145–148;
 antar dhauti 41, 42–75;
 bahiranga trataka 142,
 145–148;
 bahishkrita antar dhauti 42,
 66–74;
 basti 35, 38, 107–117, 129;
 bhramara nauli 132, 135–
 137;
 dakshina nauli 131, 134–
 135;
 danda dhauti 87–89;
 danta dhauti 41, 75–86;
 dantamoola dhauti 75,
 76–78;
 dhauti 35, 37–38, 41–106,
 129;
 hrid dhauti 41, 87–100;
 jala basti 110–113;
 jala neti 56, 119–124;
 jihvamoola, see shatkarma,
 jihva shodhana dhauti;
 jihva shodhana dhauti 75,
 79–81;
 kapalbhata 35, 39, 130,
 150–161;
 kapalrandhra dhauti 75,
 84–86;
 karnarandhra dhauti 75,
 81–84;
 kunjala kriya 56, 90–93;
 lauliki 35, 38–39, 129–139;
 madhyama nauli 131,
 132–133;
 moola shodhana 41, 101–
 106;
 nauli, see lauliki;
 neti 35, 38, 118–128, 129;
 shankhaprakshalana, see
 shatkarma, varisara antar
 dhauti;
 sheetkrama kapalbhata
 159–161;
 sthala basti 113–117;
 sutra neti 124–127;
 trataka 35, 39, 130, 140–
 149;
 vahnisara antar dhauti 42,
 60–66, 130;
 vama nauli 131, 133–134;
 vaman dhauti 89–94;
 varisara antar dhauti 42,
 47–60;
 vastra dhauti 95–100;
 vatakrama kapalbhata
 151–157;
 vatsara antar dhauti 42,
 43–47;
 vyaghra kriya 93–94;

vyutkrama kapalbhati
 157–161
 Shiva 305, 332, 417–418
 Shoonya, see void
 Siddhi 67, 108, 128, 140, 143,
 147, 174, 262, 267, 272, 298,
 299, 303, 324, 342, 347, 363,
 387, 439, 442
 Soul 464, 466–467, 478–480,
 493–494, 508, 510
 Surrender 472–473
 Sushumna nadi, see nadi
 Swadhisthana chakra, see
 chakra

 Tamas, tamasic, see guna
 Tantra 261, 340
 Tattwa, see element
 Tongue 80

 Udana vayu, see vayu

 Vayu 102, 423–424; apana
 vayu 94, 171, 267, 280, 334,
 424; prana vayu 102, 125,
 280, 334, 424; samana vayu
 102, 280, 424; sub-pranas
 425–426; udana vayu 103,
 424; vyana vayu 103, 425
 Vayu tattwa, see element, air
 Vijnanamaya kosha, see kosha
 Vishnu 1, 294, 510–513
 Vishuddhi chakra, see chakra
 Visualization 455–456
 Void 477
 Vritti 378–379, 489–490
 Vyana vayu, see vayu

 Wish-fulfilling tree 457,
 461–462

 Yama 2
 Yantra 286–288, 292, 295, 300,
 304
 Yoga Sutras 138
 Yogi 14

Notes

Notes

Swami Niranjanananda was born in Rajnandgaon (Chhattisgarh) in 1960. Guided from birth by his guru, Swami Satyananda Saraswati, he came to live at the Bihar School of Yoga in Munger at the age of four where he received training in yogic and spiritual sciences through yoga nidra. In 1971 he was initiated into Dashnami sannyasa, and for twelve years he lived overseas, acquiring an understanding of different cultures and helping further his guru's mission to spread yoga 'from door to door and shore to shore'.



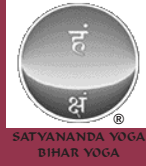
He returned to India in 1983 to guide the activities of Bihar School of Yoga, Sivananda Math and Yoga Research Foundation at Ganga Darshan. In 1990 he was initiated as a paramahansa sannyasin and in 1993 anointed spiritual preceptor in succession to Swami Satyananda Saraswati. He established Bihar Yoga Bharati, the first university of yoga, in 1994, Yoga Publications Trust in 2000, and a children's yoga movement, Bal Yoga Mitra Mandal, in 1995. He travelled extensively to guide seekers around the world until 2009, when he received the command to commence a new phase of sannyasa life.

In 2010, he established Sannyasa Peeth, to enable seekers to experience the spiritual and cultural traditions of India in their essence. The year marked his entry into a phase of higher sadhana and tirtha yatra.

In 2013, he conducted the World Yoga Convention in Munger to celebrate the golden jubilee of the Bihar School of Yoga, and launched a new era of yogic renaissance. In 2013 he also commenced the arduous panchagni sadhana. In 2014, he embarked on a Bharat Yatra, an all-India tour, transmitting the gift of yoga to all. Since then, Swami Niranjan has been working to develop the next stage of yogic training and teaching, and has initiated several programs to help people deepen their experience of yoga and imbibe the traditional wisdom. Simultaneously, he has revived various ancient knowledge systems and practices of India.

In 2017, he received the Padma Bhushan, the third highest civilian award given by the Government of India, for the outstanding work in the field of yoga.

Author of many classic books on yoga and other spiritual streams, Swami Niranjan is a magnetic source of wisdom on all aspects of yogic philosophy, practice and lifestyle. He ably combines tradition with modernity as he continues to work for his guru's mission.



Gheranda Samhita is a classical text describing seven limbs of yoga as taught by Sage Gheranda to his disciple, King Chandakapali. Sage Gheranda outlines a system which can take the serious aspirant from purification of the body to the highest states of samadhi and knowledge of the soul.

Distinguishing it from other hatha yoga systems, Sage Gheranda's seven limbs includes the *tattwa dharanas* (concentrations on the elements) and the seamless merging of hatha yoga and tantra by combining mudras, bandhas and pranayamas with mantra, yantra and mandala. The natural flow of this potent process into dhyana and samadhi is beautifully discussed, bringing the teachings to a sublime conclusion.

The commentary by Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati guides the modern reader through the details of the practices, many of which are complex, rarely described and cryptically expressed by the sage. Comprehensive instructions are given for all the techniques, while subtle understandings and insights into the underlying philosophy and purpose are presented with beauty and simplicity.

The original Sanskrit verses, with transliteration and translation are included.



[bar code here]

ISBN : 978-93-81620-19-9